

BOY MAXIMORTAL

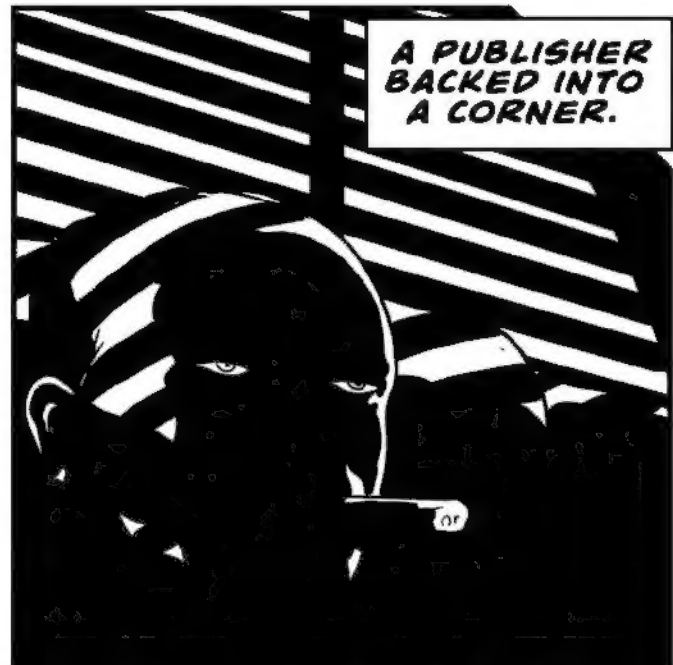
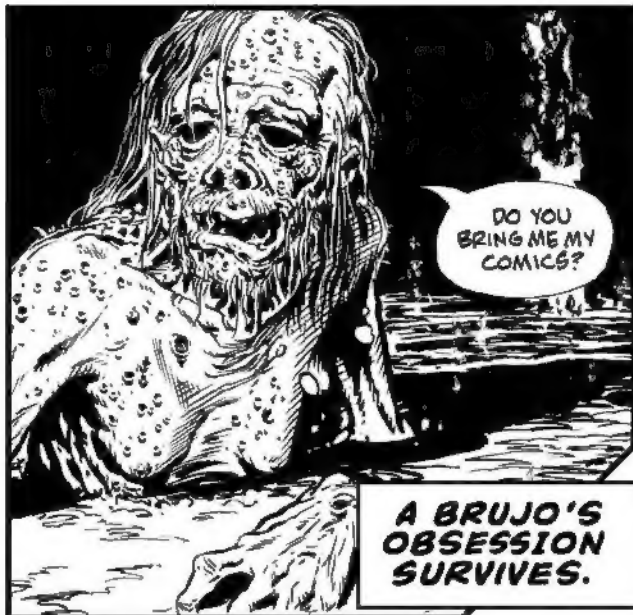


RICK VEITCH
NUMBER TWO



PREVIOUSLY IN

MAXIMORTAL



BOY MAXIMORTAL

Part Two

*Continuing Volume 2 of
The King Hell Heroica*

by Rick Veitch

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PO BOX 1371

West Townshend VT 05359

rarebit@sover.net

www.rickveitch.com

Find Rick Veitch on facebook

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SLUMBERG,
PENNSYLVANIA
SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1963

RESERVED
NO
PARKING

HEADS
UP! THE
NEW
COMICS
ARE IN!

AWWRIGHT!

GANGWAY!

I'VE BEEN
WAITING
ALL MONTH
FOR THIS!

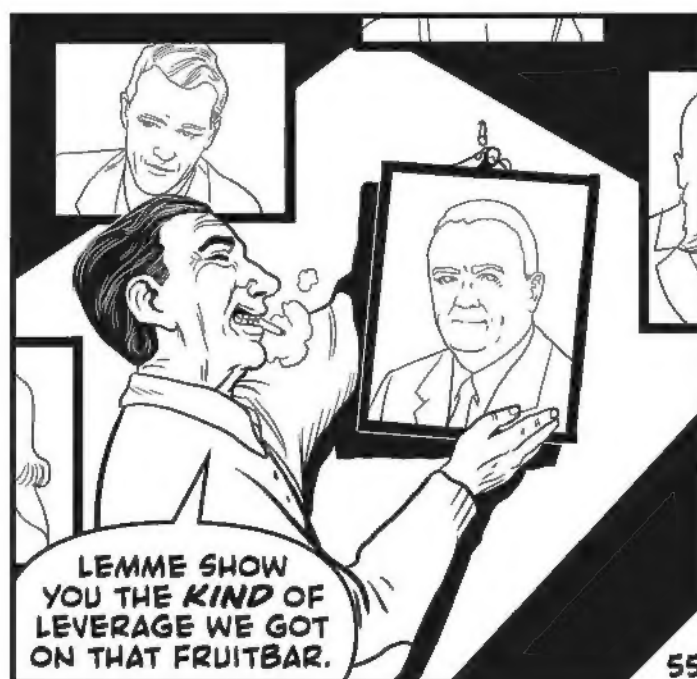
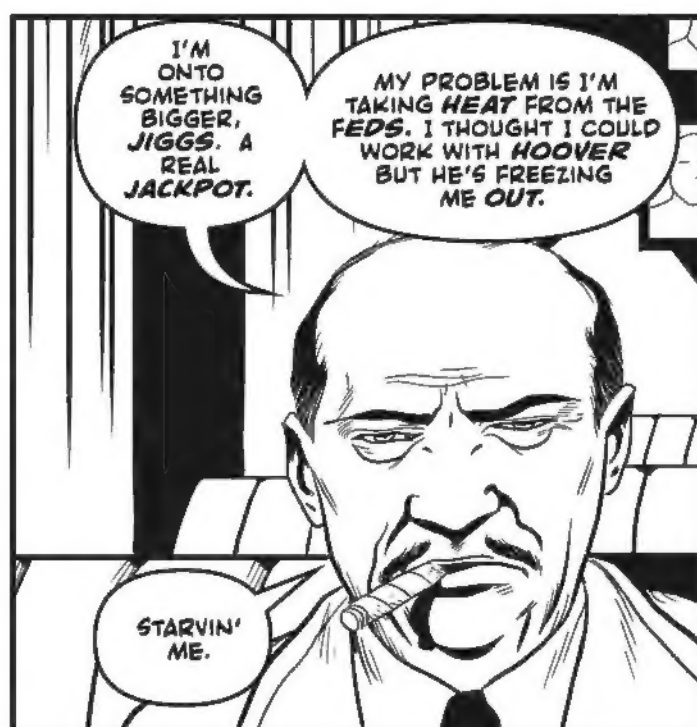
SO WHAT'S
GOT YOU
SQUIRTS DOING
THE PEE
DANCE?

GET
WITH IT,
GRANDPA!

THE LATEST
ISSUE OF
TRUE-MAN
JUST HIT THE
STANDS!

SOUNDS LIKE YOUR
FUNNY BOOK BUSINESS IS
PICKING UP, SID.

YEAH. OUR
FLAGSHIP
TITLE'S GONE
INTO A TENTH
PRINTING.





**CREEPING
JESUS! THAT'S HIM
ON HIS KNEES IN THE
LACE AND PANTIES?**

**YEAH,
PULLIN' A
TRAIN ON A
BRAZILIAN
SOCCER TEAM.**

**WE GOT THESE
WHEN HE WAS
STAYING AND
PLAYING AT ONE
OF OUR
RESORTS.**



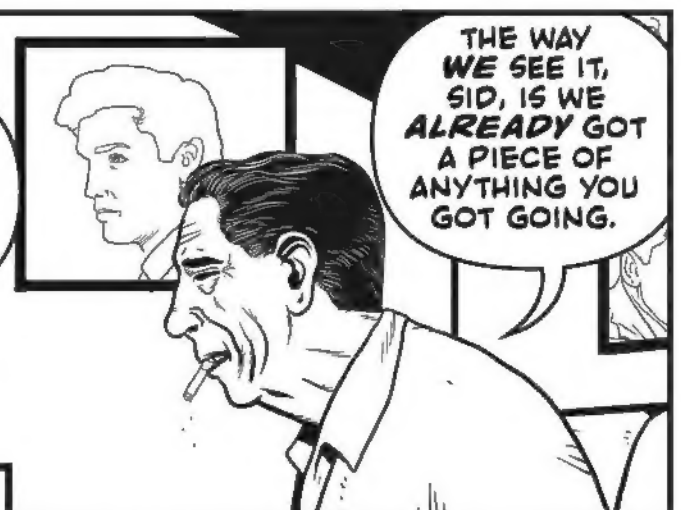
**YOU
WOULDN'T
BELIEVE THE
KIND OF KINK HE
GETS INTO. AND
NOW HE'S OUR
PIDGEON.**

**WHY DO YOU
THINK HE GETS
UP IN FRONT OF
CONGRESS AND
SAYS WE DON'T
HAVE A MAFIA IN
THIS COUNTRY?**

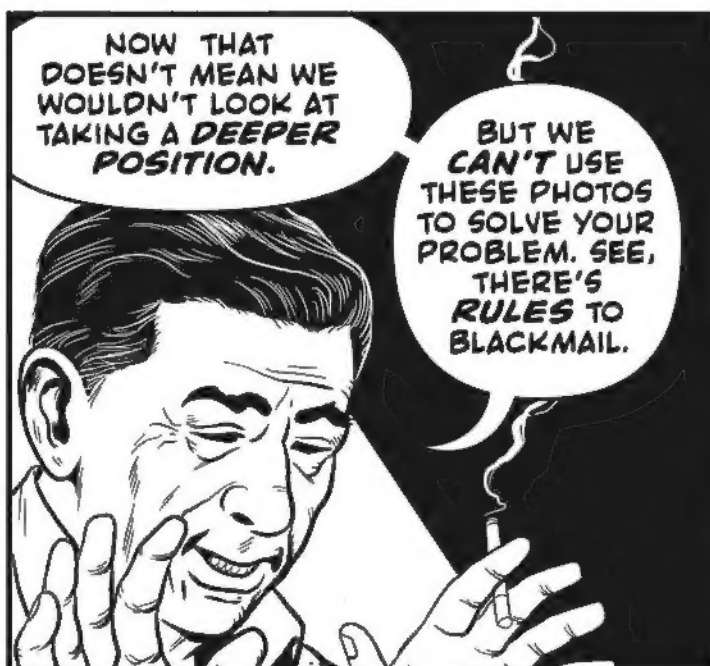


**THIS! THIS IS
JUST THE KIND OF
TOOL I NEED!**

**I'M
ONTO THE
BIGGEST PLAY
EVER, JIGGS.
CLEAR HOOVER
OUT OF MY WAY
AND I'LL CUT YOU
IN.**



**THE WAY
WE SEE IT,
SID, IS WE
ALREADY GOT
A PIECE OF
ANYTHING YOU
GOT GOING.**



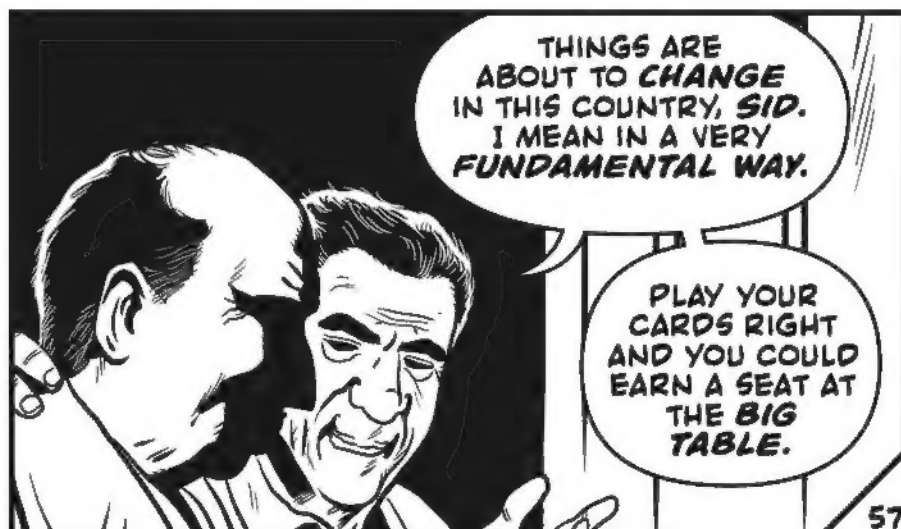
**NOW THAT
DOESN'T MEAN WE
WOULDN'T LOOK AT
TAKING A DEEPER
POSITION.**

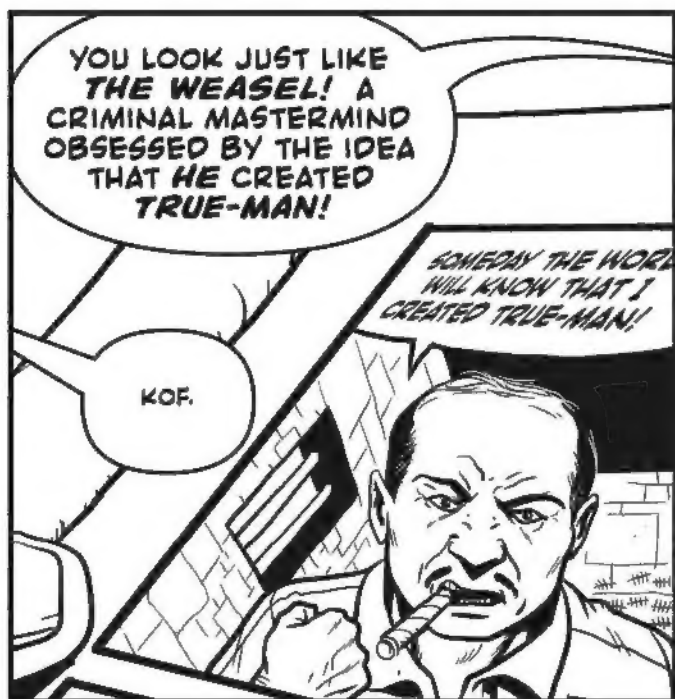
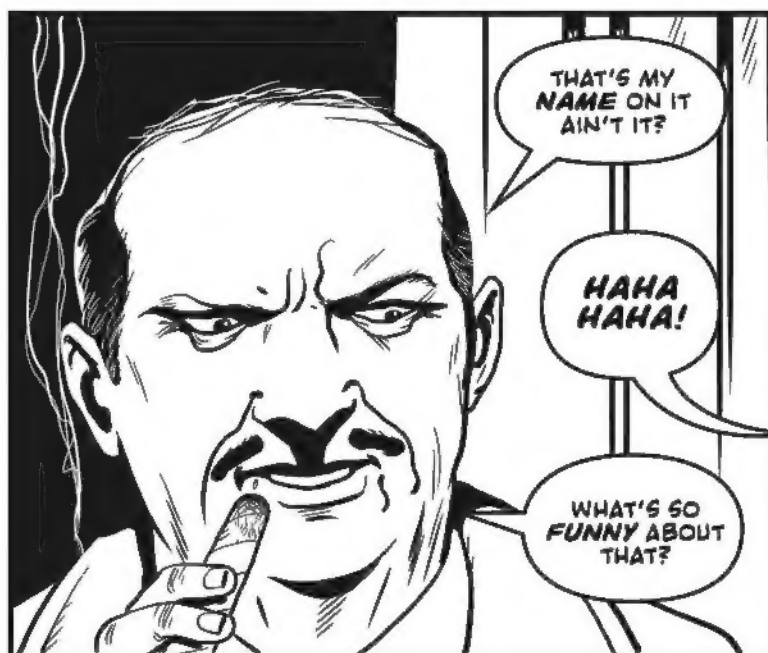
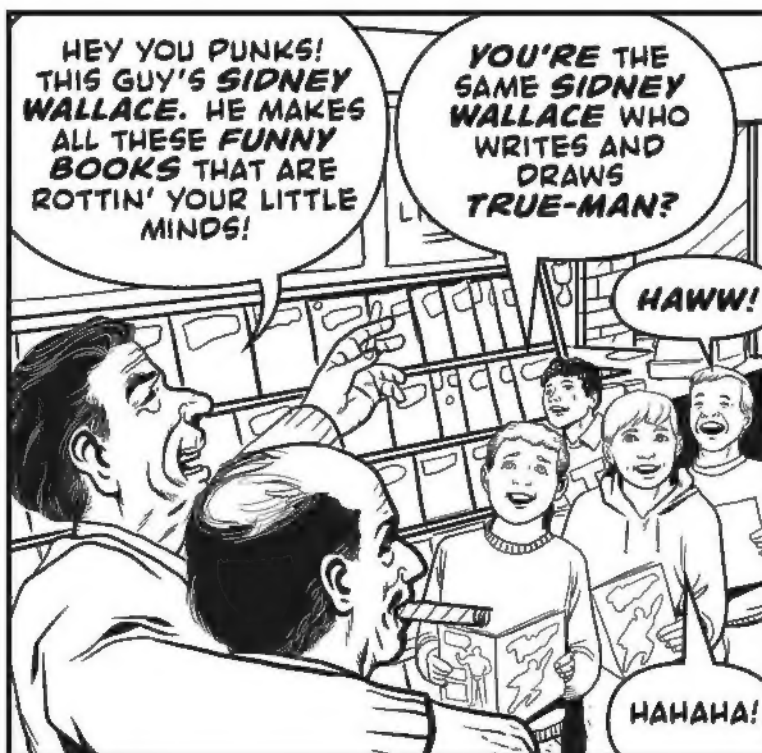
**BUT WE
CAN'T USE
THESE PHOTOS
TO SOLVE YOUR
PROBLEM. SEE,
THERE'S
RULES TO
BLACKMAIL.**

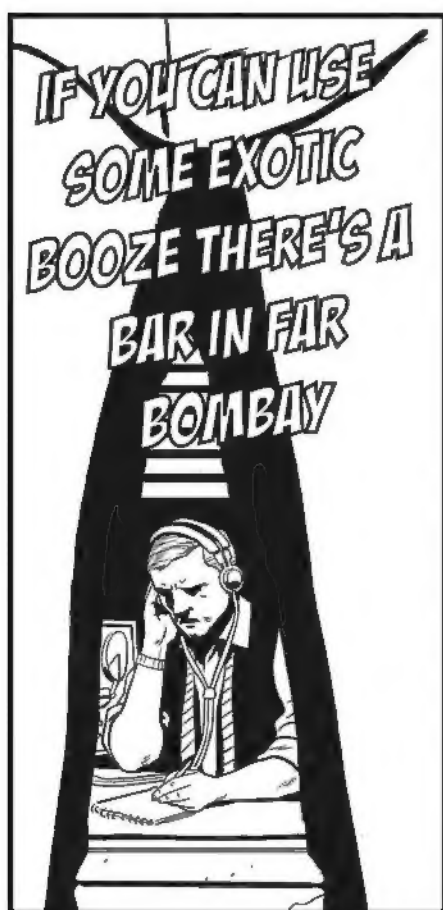
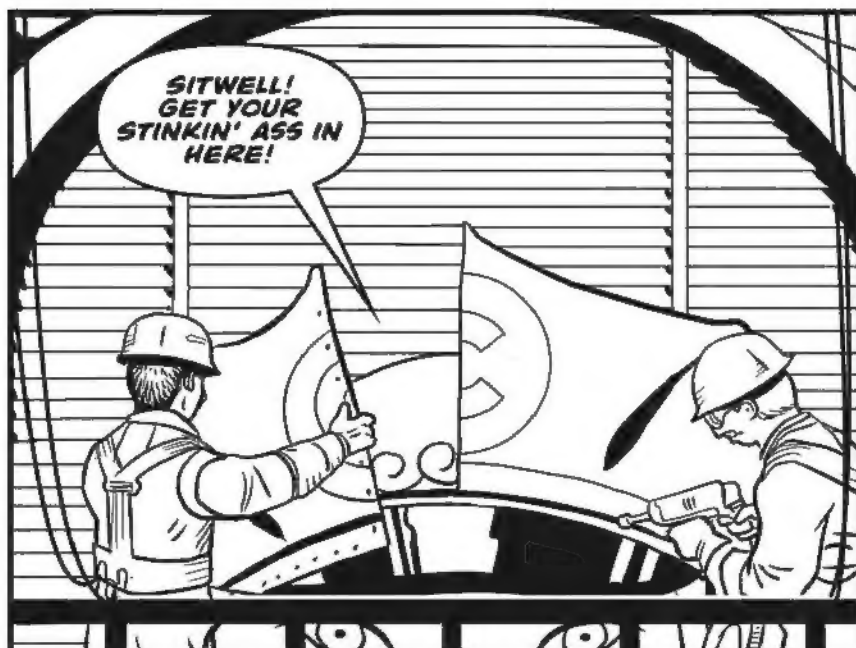


**WE ALREADY
AGREED TO
TERMS WITH THE
CUPCAKE AND HE'S
BEEN HOLDIN' UP
HIS END.**

**SO WE CAN'T
BRING ANY NEW
DEMANDS TO THE
TABLE WITHOUT
UPSETTING THE
APPLECART,
CAPEESH?**

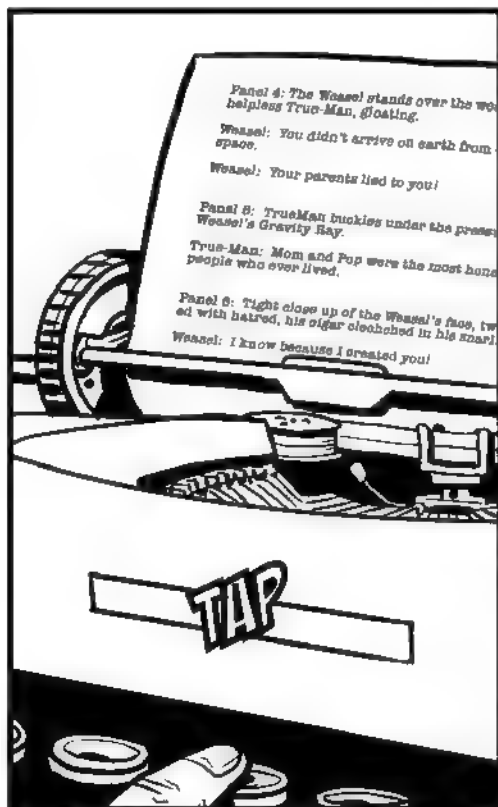






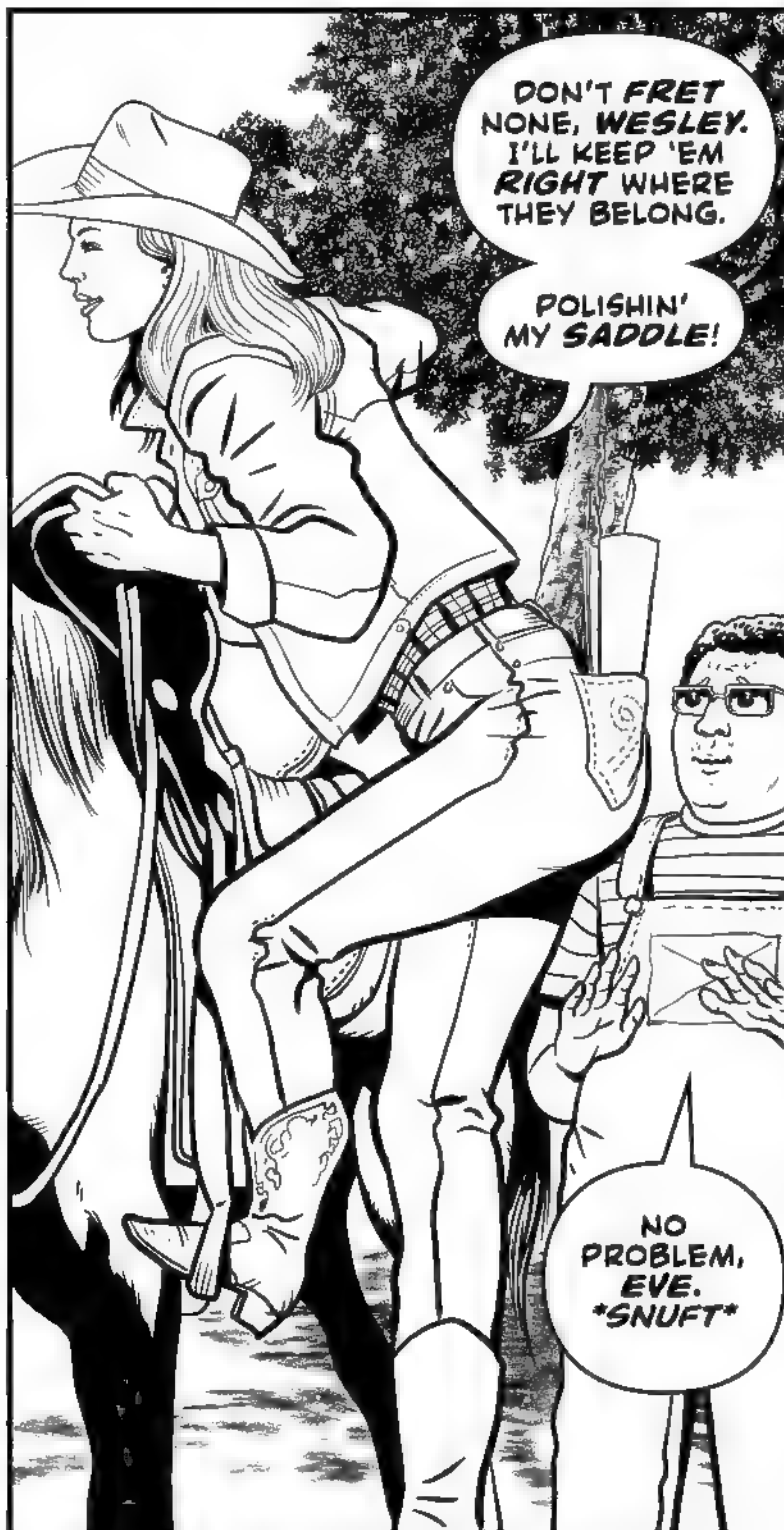


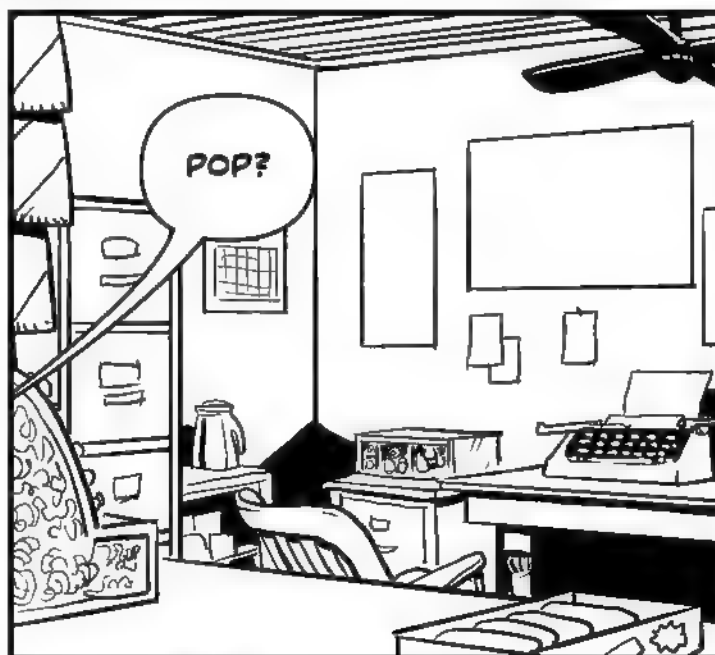
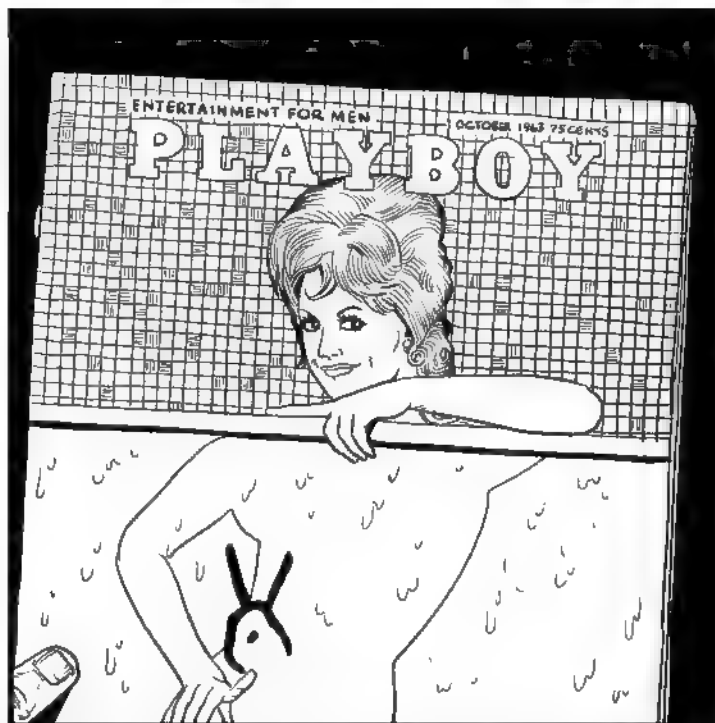


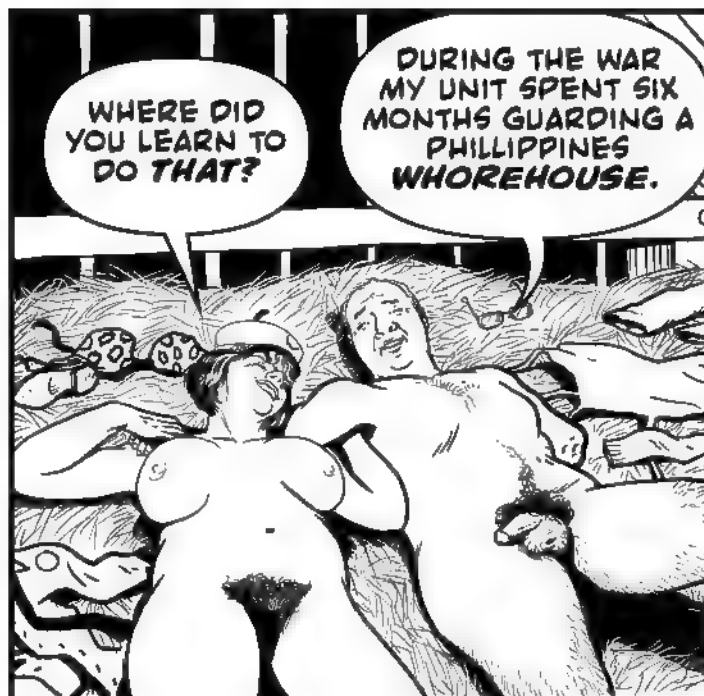


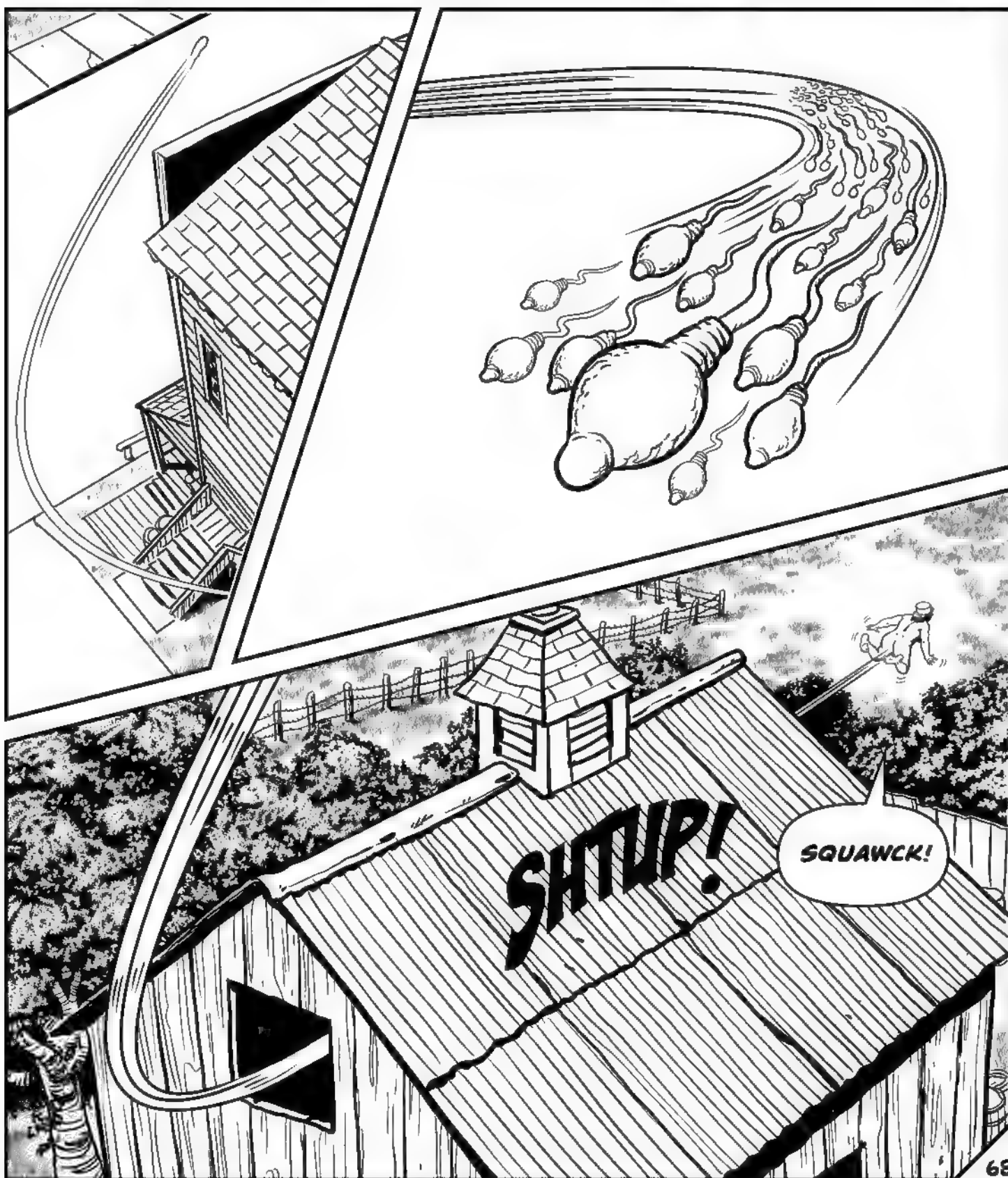
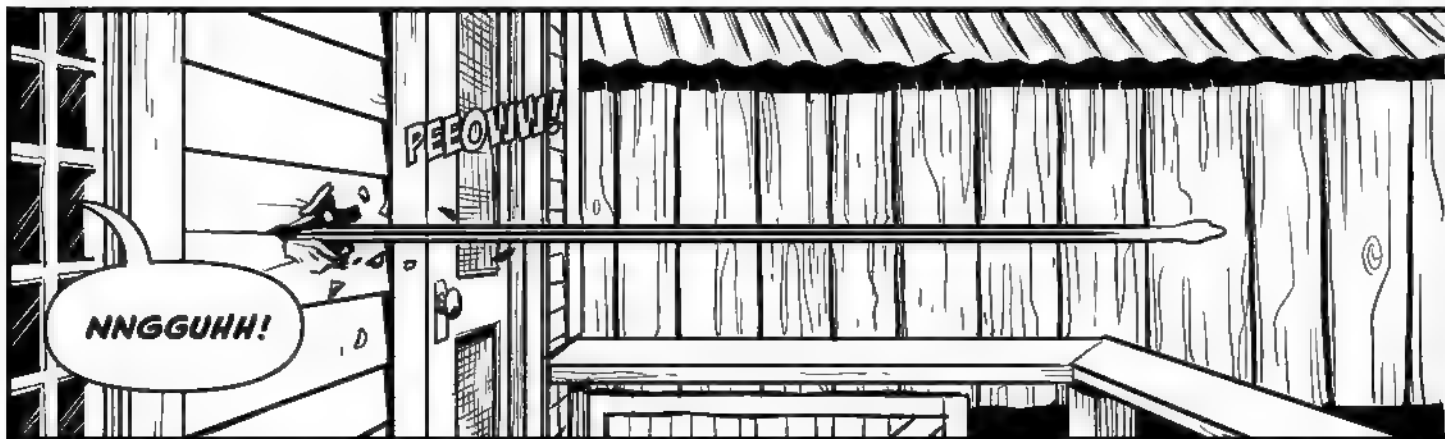




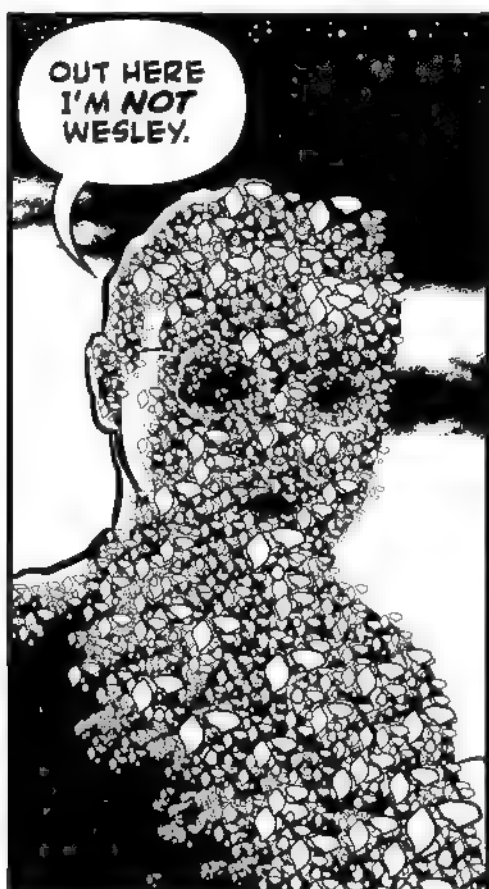
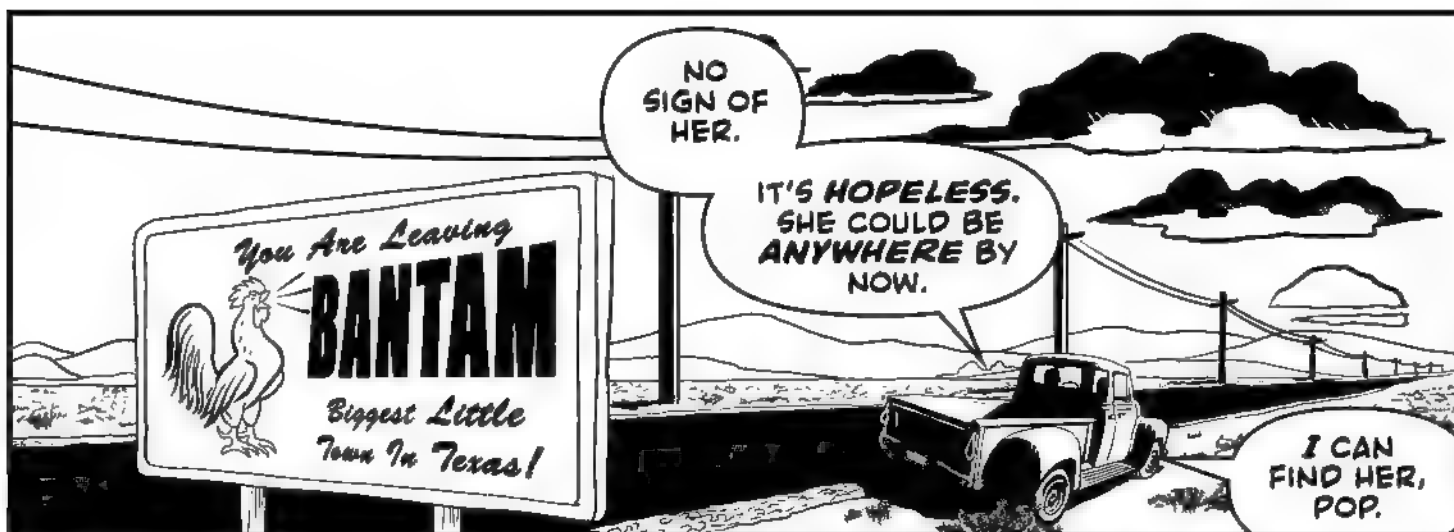








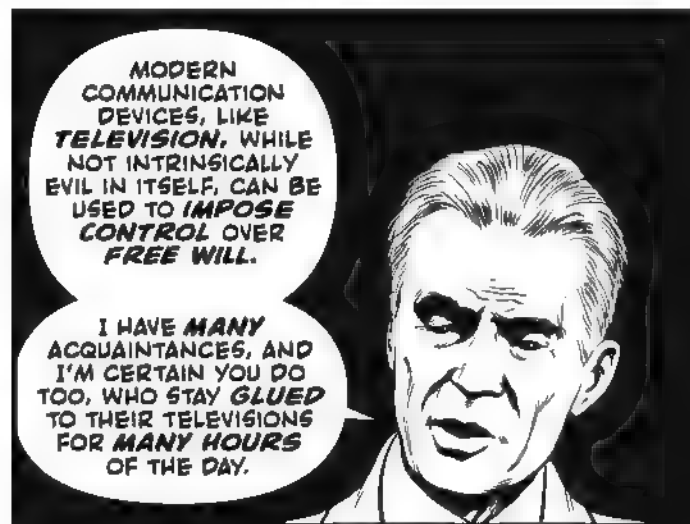
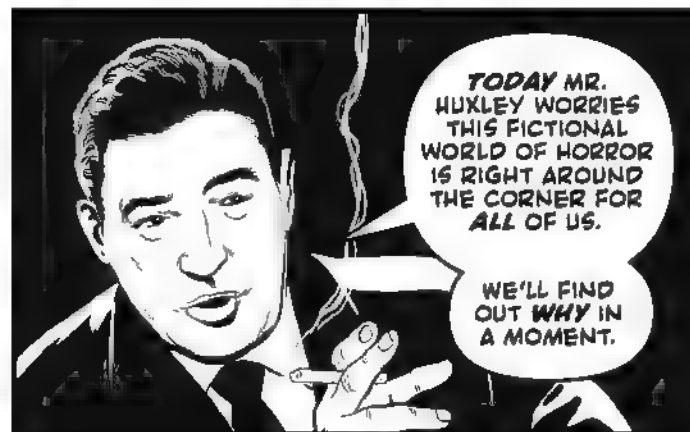
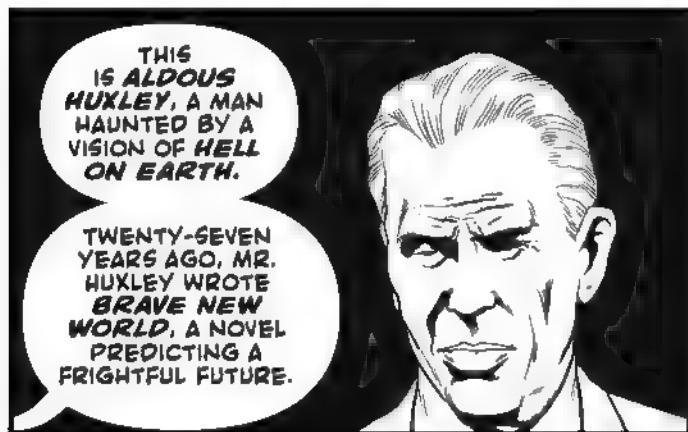


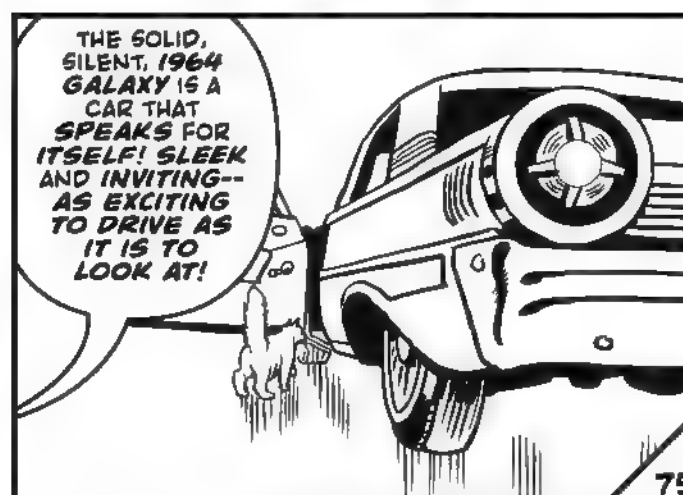
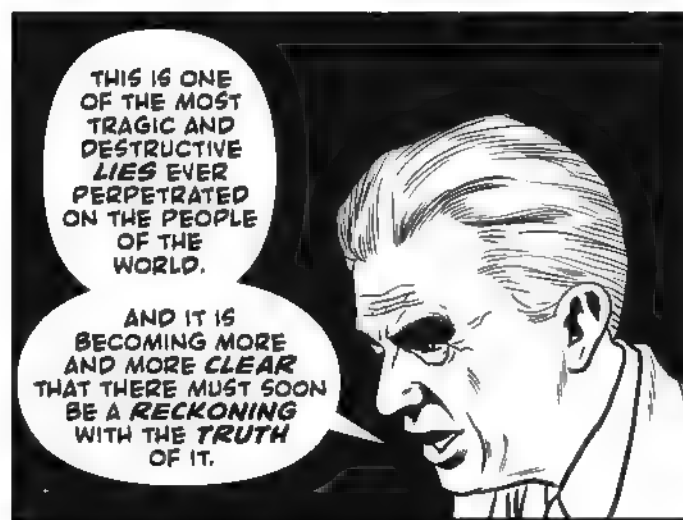
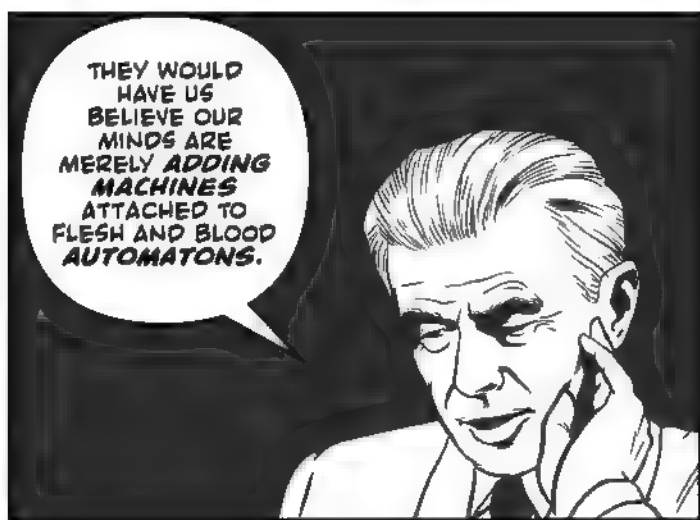
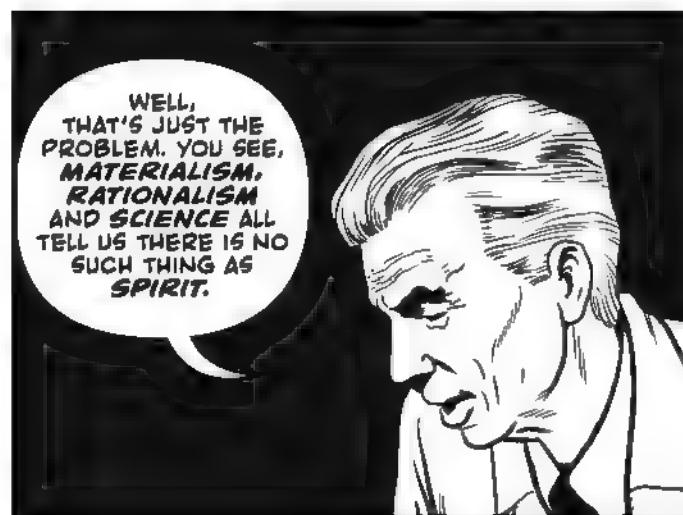
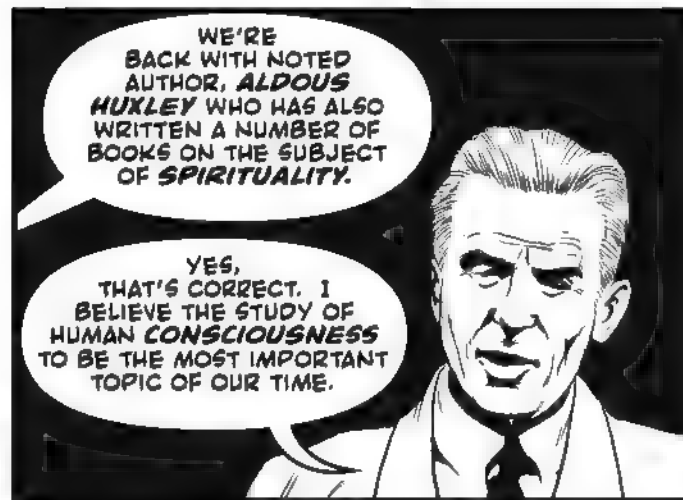
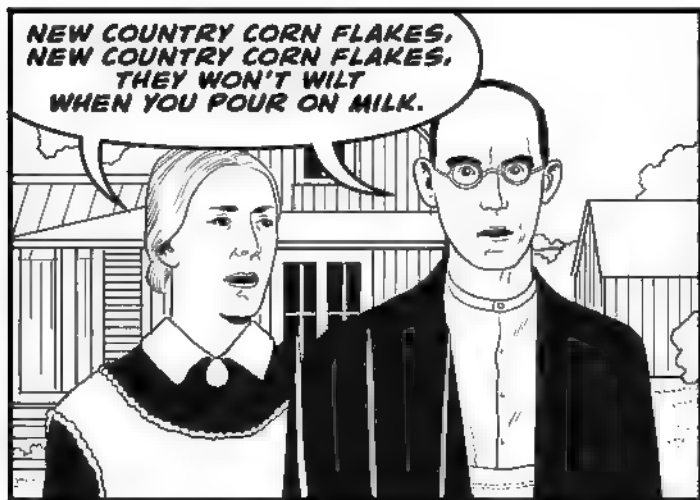


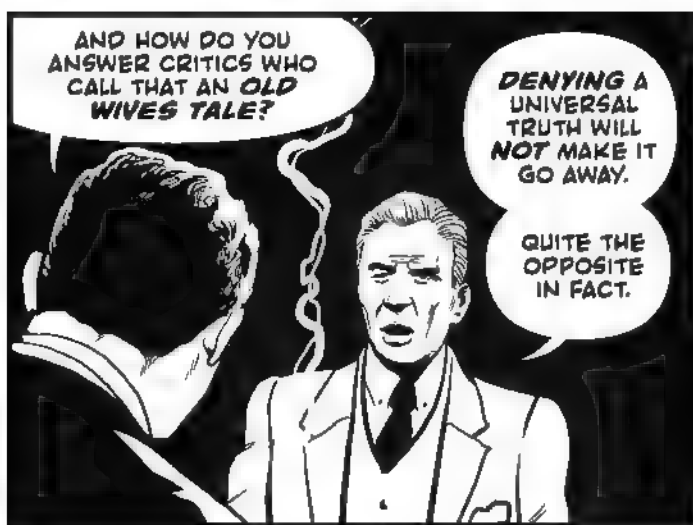
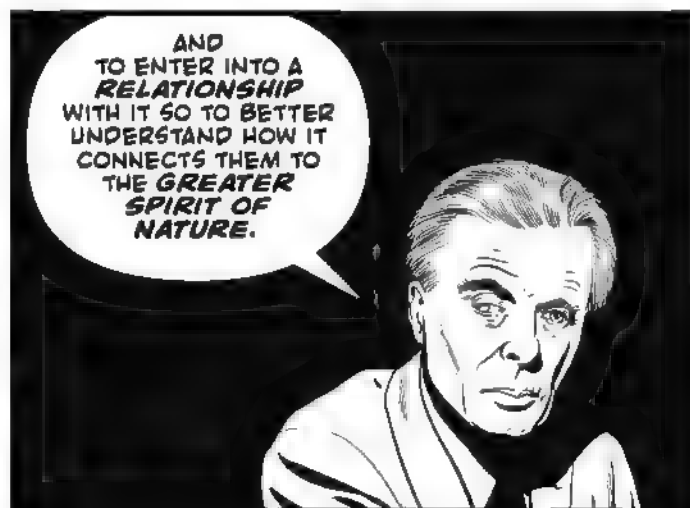
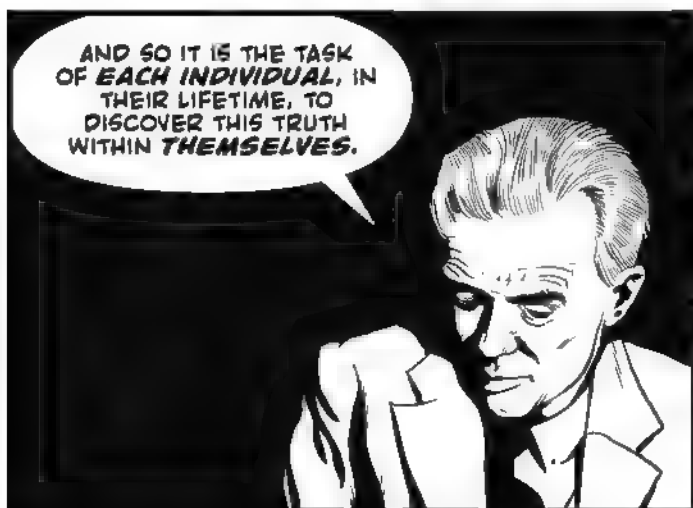
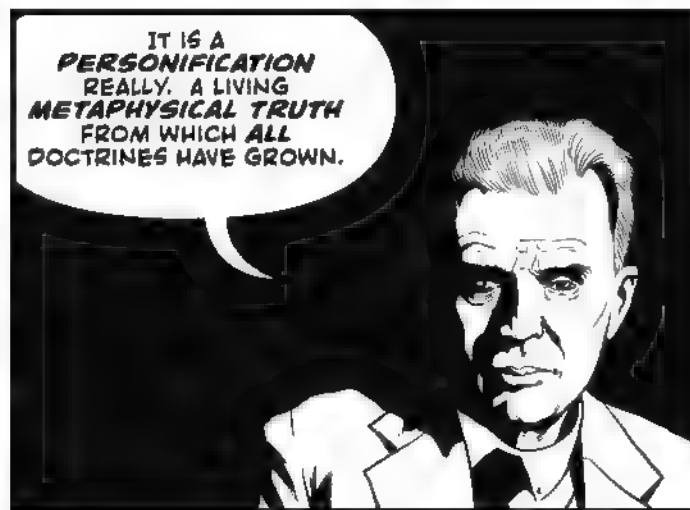
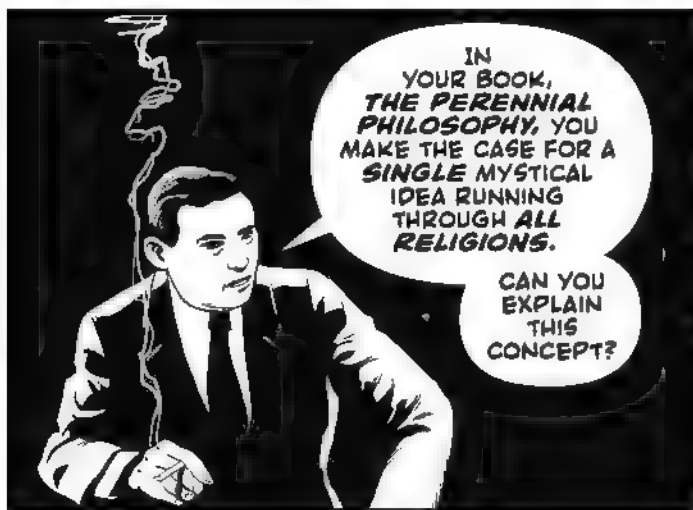


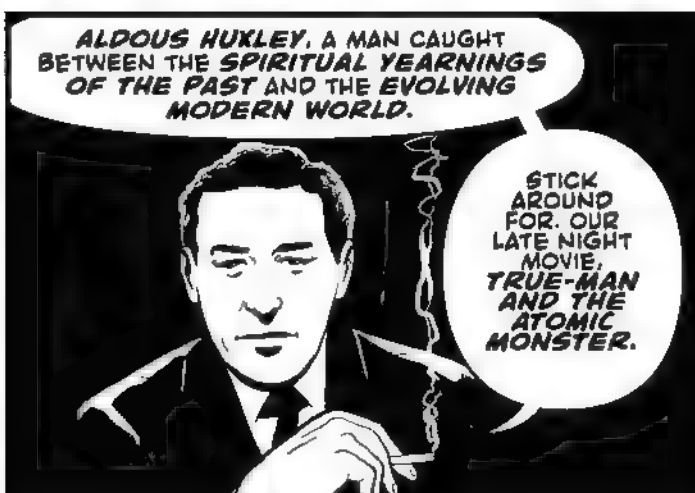
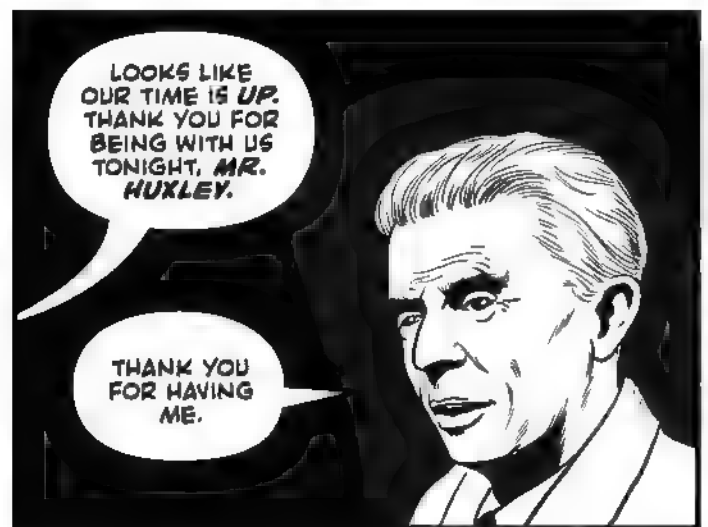
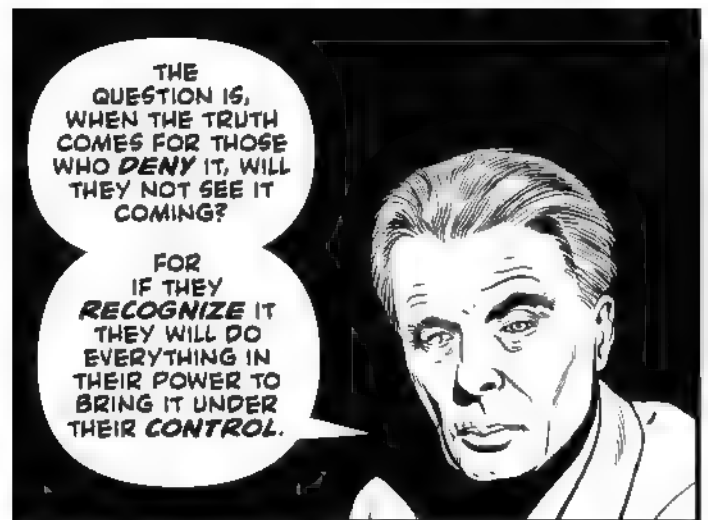
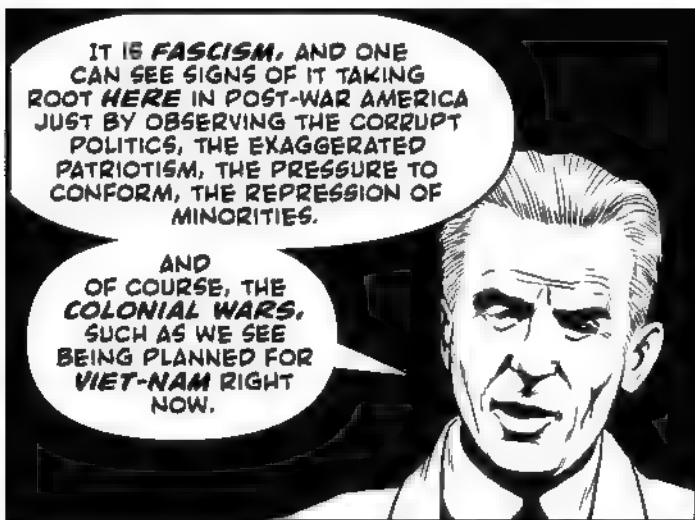
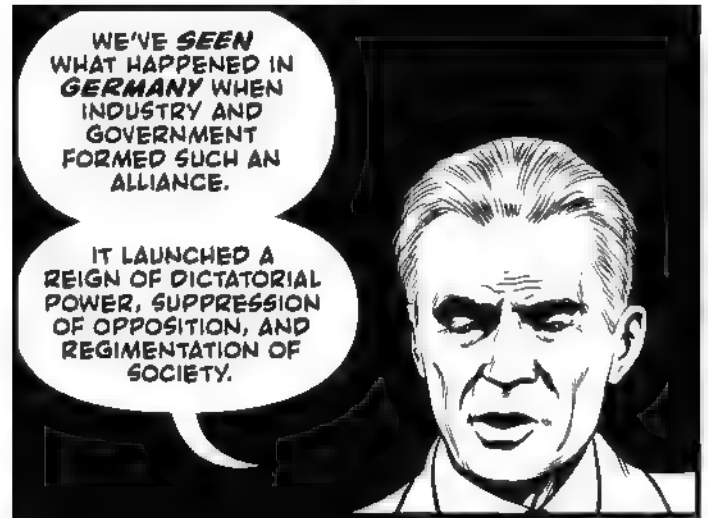
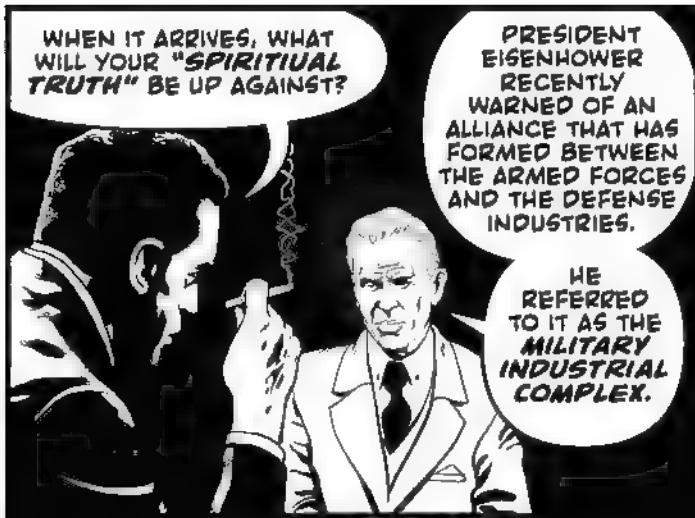
















Y'KNOW WHAT, **BLONDIE**? I'M SO PARCHED I'M SPITTIN' COTTON.

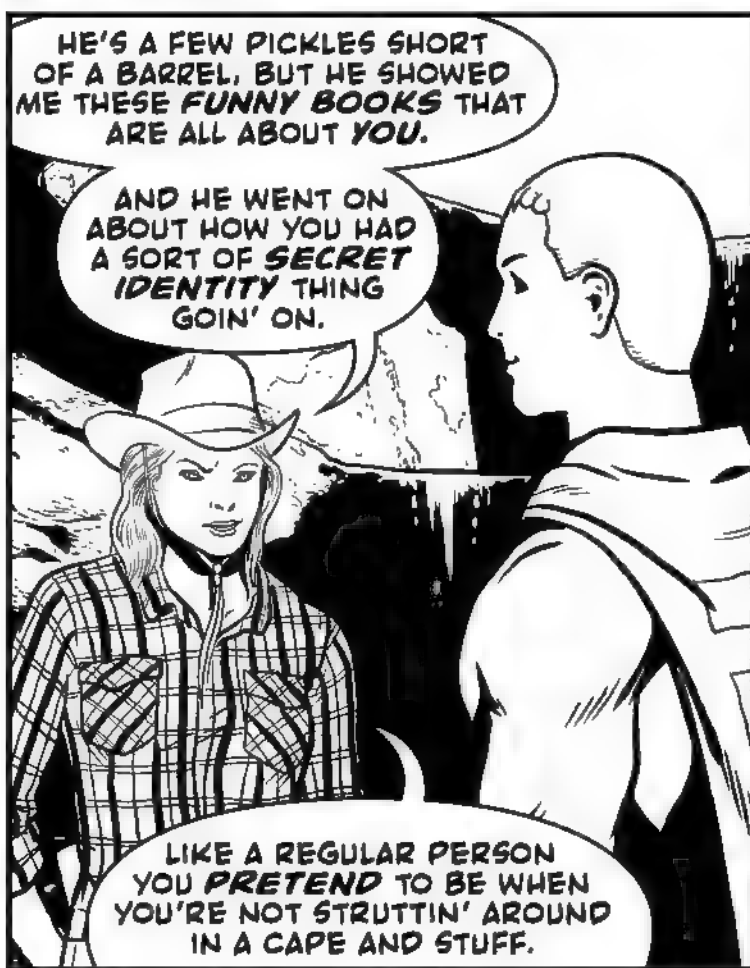
WHAT SAY WE HOLE UP IN THIS LITTLE ARROYA FOR A SPELL?



'SIDES, I WANT TO TELL YOU SOMETHING I **FIGURED OUT** ABOUT YOU!

OH?

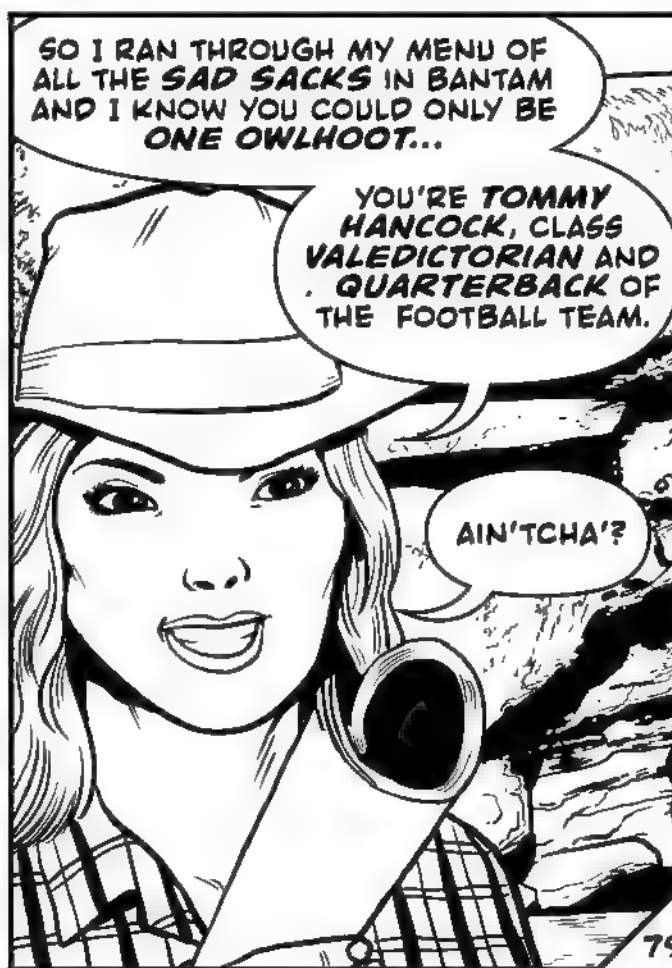
SEE, I WAS OVER AT **WISELY'S'S** STORE THE OTHER DAY TALKIN' TO **WESLEY**.



HE'S A FEW PICKLES SHORT OF A BARREL, BUT HE SHOWED ME THESE **FUNNY BOOKS** THAT ARE ALL ABOUT **YOU**.

AND HE WENT ON ABOUT HOW YOU HAD A SORT OF **SECRET IDENTITY** THING GOIN' ON.

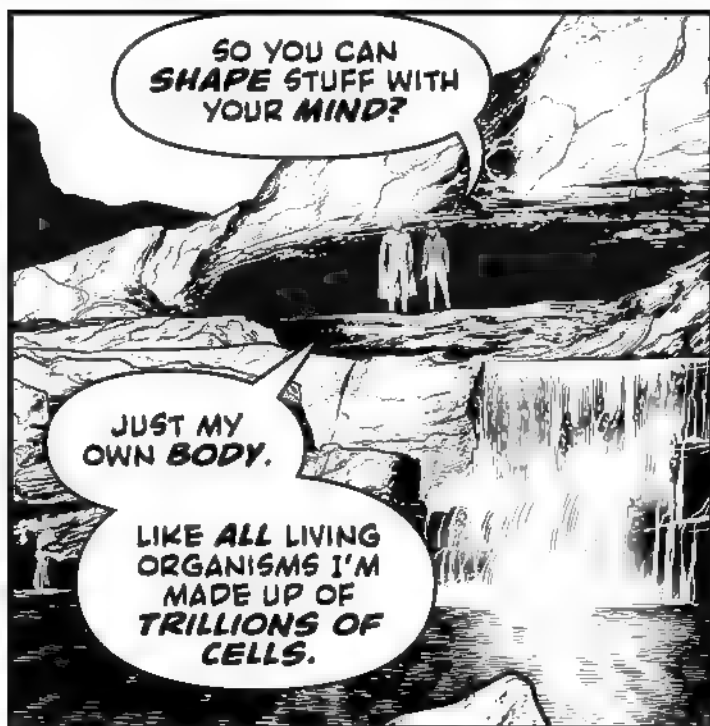
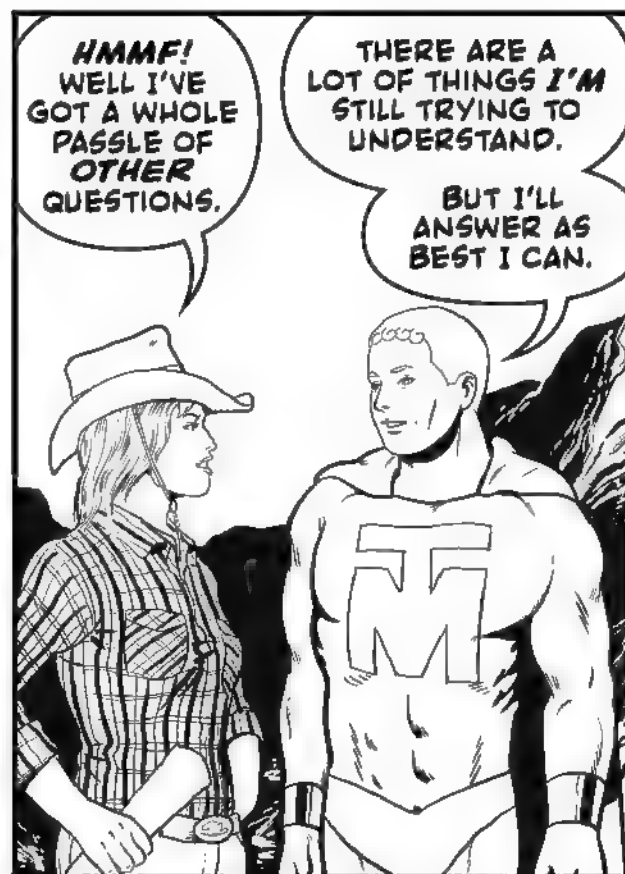
LIKE A REGULAR PERSON YOU **PRETEND** TO BE WHEN YOU'RE NOT STRUTTIN' AROUND IN A CAPE AND STUFF.

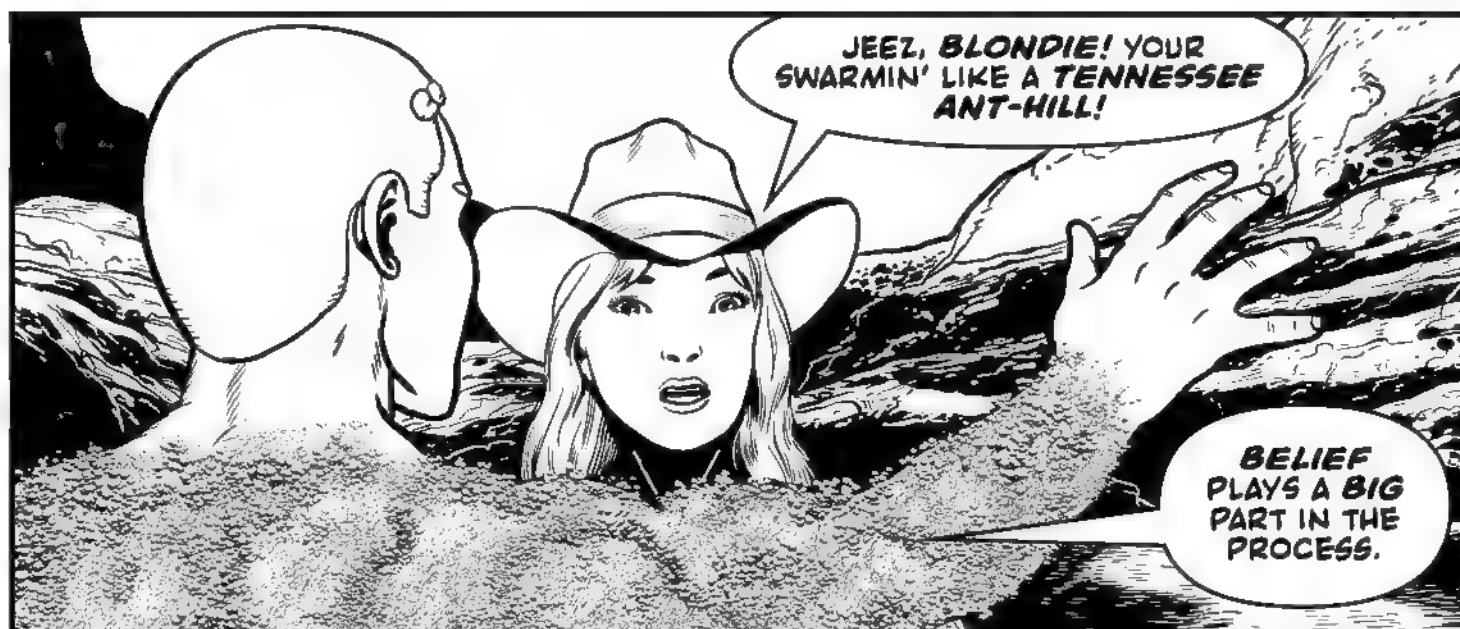


SO I RAN THROUGH MY MENU OF ALL THE **SAD SACKS** IN BANTAM AND I KNOW YOU COULD ONLY BE **ONE OWLHOOT...**

YOU'RE **TOMMY HANCOCK**, CLASS **VALEDICTORIAN** AND **QUARTERBACK** OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM.

AIN'TCHA'?





JEEZ, BLONDIE! YOUR SWARMIN' LIKE A TENNESSEE ANT-HILL!

BELIEF PLAYS A BIG PART IN THE PROCESS.



I BECOME WHAT I BELIEVE.

CERTAIN FORMS, LIKE THIS, ARE MORE NATURAL TO ME.

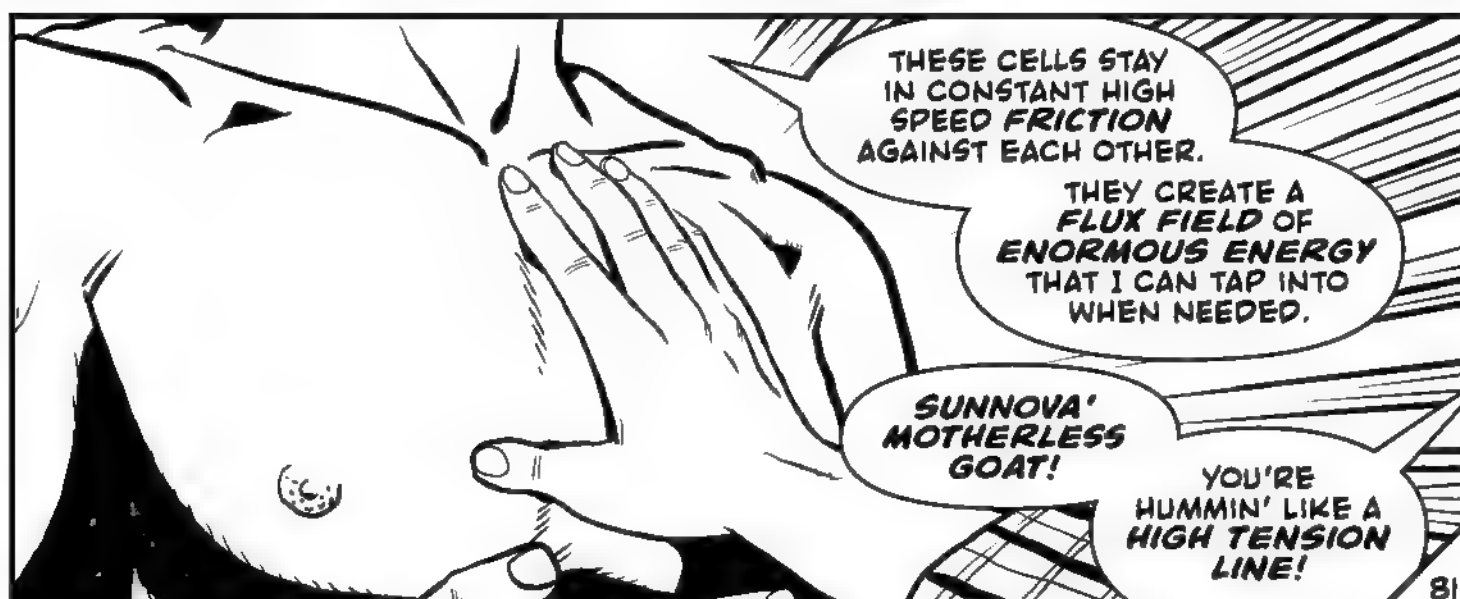
I'D AGREE. THAT'S PURTY NATURAL.

SO WHERE DO THE SUPER POWERS COME FROM?



POWER IS GENERATED HERE.

IN MY HEART.



THESE CELLS STAY IN CONSTANT HIGH SPEED FRICTION AGAINST EACH OTHER.

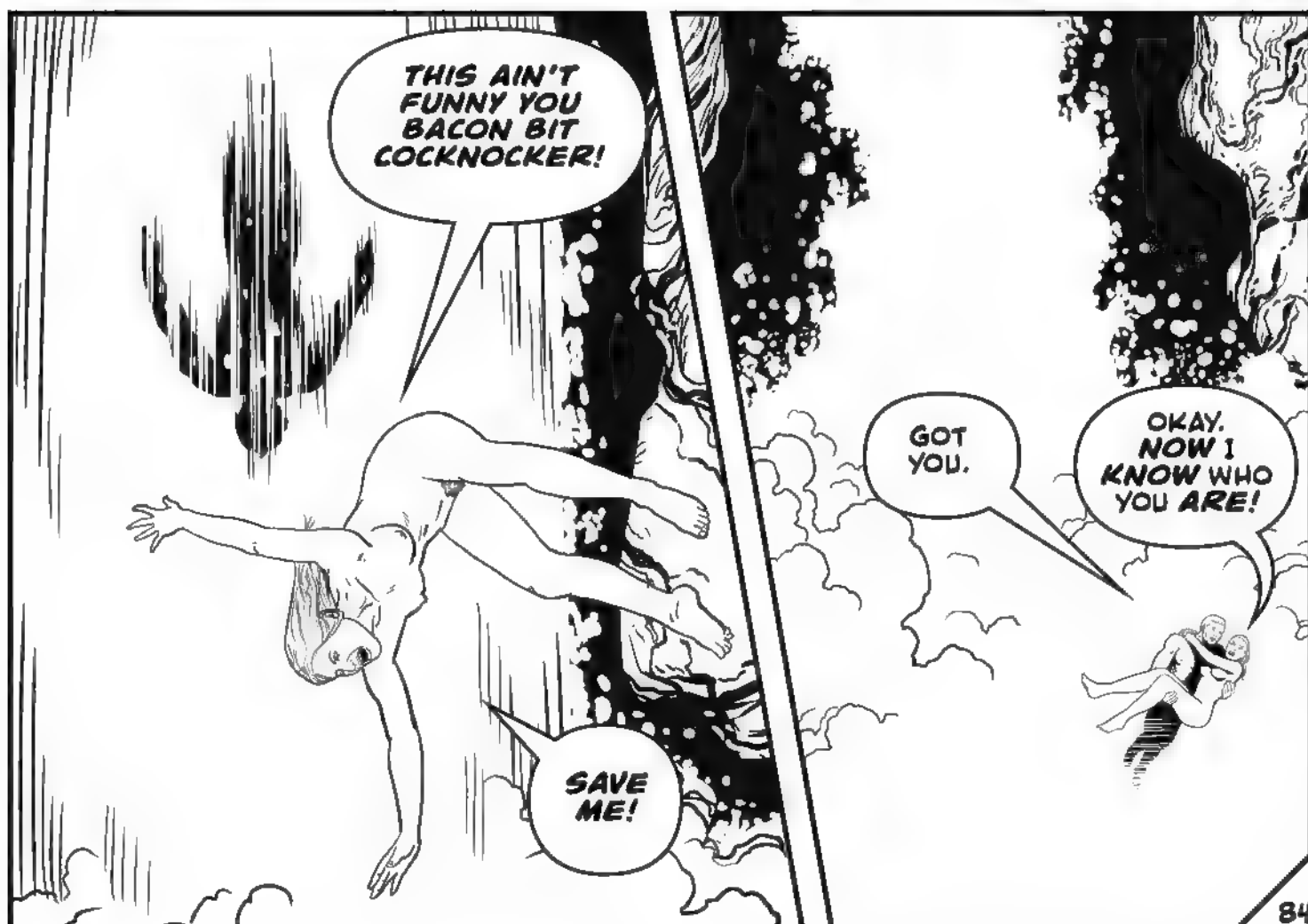
THEY CREATE A FLUX FIELD OF ENORMOUS ENERGY THAT I CAN TAP INTO WHEN NEEDED.

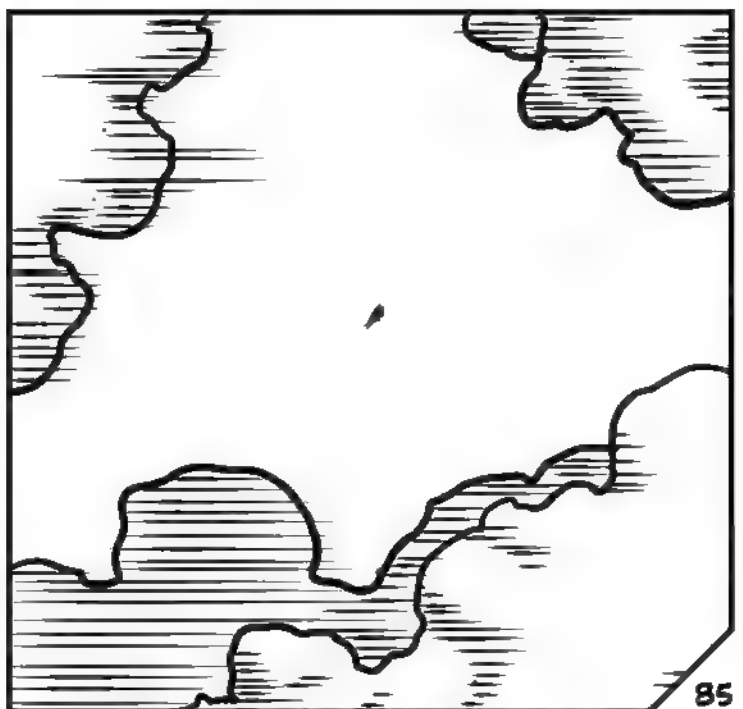
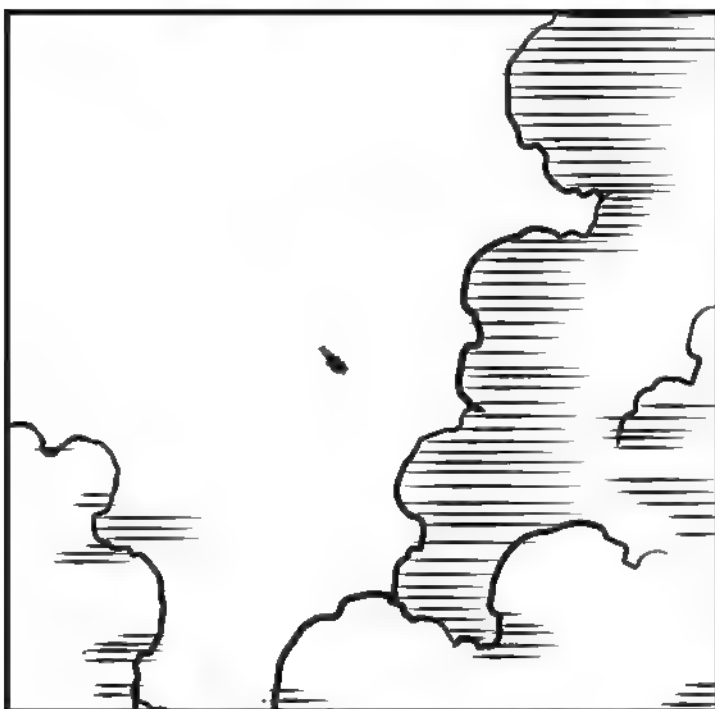
SUNNOVA' MOTHERLESS GOAT!

YOU'RE HUMMIN' LIKE A HIGH TENSION LINE!











IF
THAT WASN'T
THE BEST TIME I
EVER HAD IN MY
LIFE, THEN GOD'S
A POSSUM.

LET'S
JUST STAY
HERE
FOREVER,
OKAY?

I
SHOULD
GET YOU
HOME.



I DON'T KNOW
HOW I'M GOING TO
EXPLAIN YOU TO MY
DADDY.

FOR NOW YOU
MUST KEEP ME A
SECRET FROM
EVERYONE,
INCLUDING YOUR
PARENTS.



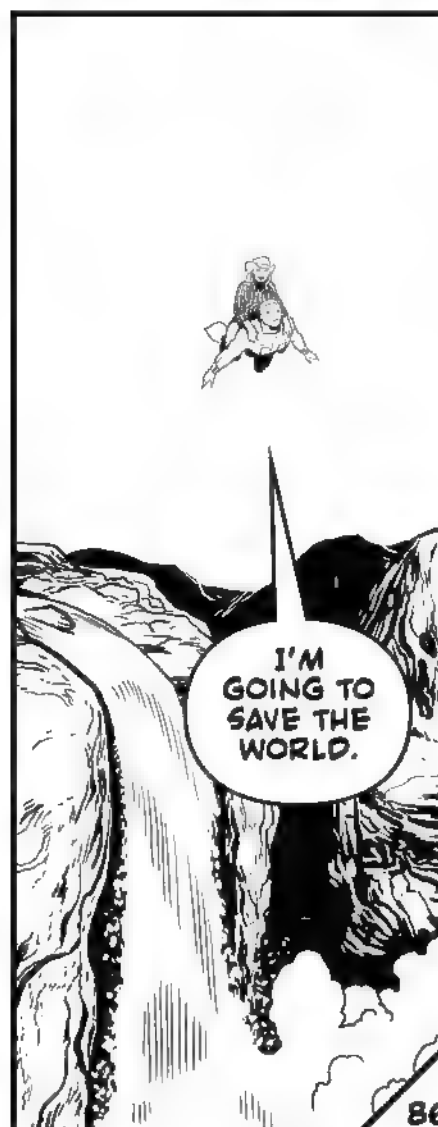
I HAVE AN
IMPORTANT TASK
TO ACCOMPLISH. AND
THINGS COULD GET
VERY DANGEROUS
FOR THOSE CLOSE
TO ME.

WESLEY'S FUNNY
BOOK SAYS THAT'S
WHY YOU USE A
SECRET IDENTITY.



TELL ME WHAT'S SO
ALL-FIRED IMPORTANT
YOU GOTTA SNEAK
AROUND LIKE SOME
SNOKE HORN?

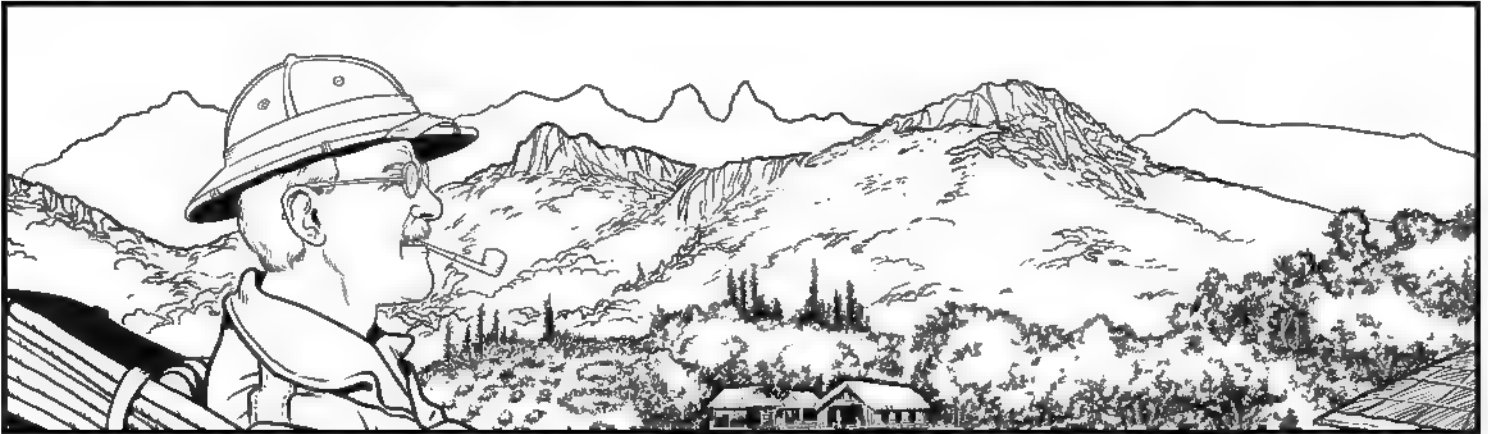
IT'S THE
REASON I'M
HERE, EVA.



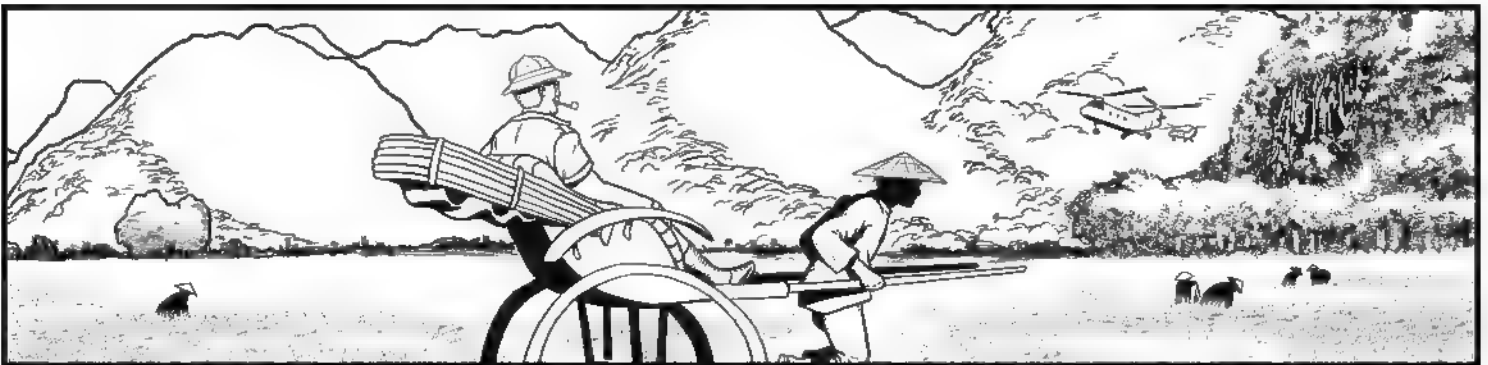
I'M
GOING TO
SAVE THE
WORLD.

TO: DIRECTOR
FROM: SAIGON
AGENT: DULLES
PROJECT: TRUMAN
ACTION: THICH QUANG DUC

1. Departed Saigon Station with all plans in place for removal of President Diem and Madam Nhu.
2. Station supplying financial and logistical support for General Van Don's loyalist troops. Expect new regime installed within the week.



3. Downtime seen as opportunity to follow new research lead for Project Truman and see countryside before it disappears.
4. Area north of the city more beautiful than ever imagined. Small villages. Substinance farming. Idyllic way of life in many ways. Poor beggers have no idea what we have in store for them.



5. Research team checking for possible references to the creature in past recorded history turned up mention of a "True-Man" in ancient Buddhist text attributed to Lao Tzu.
7. It wasn't much of a lead but considering the importance of the project I thought best to follow it to the bitter end.



8. Lao Tzu credited as originator of Taoism in the Sixth century. Taught of living in harmony with the source of all creation.

9. Taoist expert, Thich Quang Duc, was on retreat at Bien Ho monastery so I sought to question him concerning Lao Tzu's mysterious "True-Man".



10. Monastery is home to one of the finest giant Buddha figures in all of south-east Asia. Carved from a single granite boulder in 1253.

11. Arrived to find monks in mourning as the great Buddha had inexplicably split down the center the day before my arrival.



12. I spent a few moments contemplating what possible force of nature could cleave such a monumental piece of granite so perfectly. But I couldn't come up with a handy answer.

13. Then there was a gentle voice behind me saying, 'It was the Tao, of course'.



14. Thich Quang Duc a small man of indeterminate age. Projected a scholarly aura tempered by philosophical bent. I'd bet money he'd never experienced the pleasures of the flesh.

15. After a few pleasantries he was happy to oblige my questions. I inquired as to the nature of the Tao and its relationship to the "True-Man."



16. He described the Tao as a "celestial fire"; an infinite ocean of creative energy that continually brings the world into existence and is in all things.

17. Micro-expression analysis indicated he is completely convinced he experiences this "celestial fire" first hand.



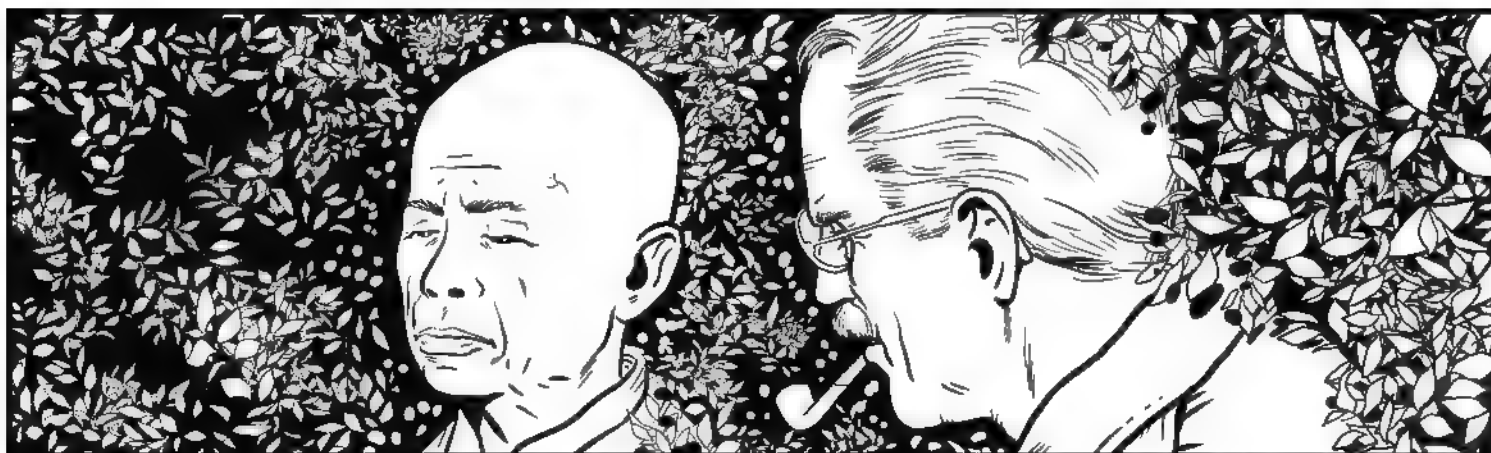
18. He said when Lao Tzu spoke of the "True-Man" he was describing a real thing; the hidden part of each human being that is reflected in this "celestial fire".

19. When I pressed him on whether the "True-Man" should be understood as a myth or as an actual living creature. He replied "Both."



20. "The "True-Man" is our unrealized potential in the Tao and as such he takes his form from all our strengths and weaknesses." he said.

21. He seemed to choose his words carefully. "It is the task of each person to recognize the "Celestial Fire". For some, knowing comes from a meditative life. But for most, it is only perceived unconsciously bobbing among the flotsam and jetsam of everyday existence."



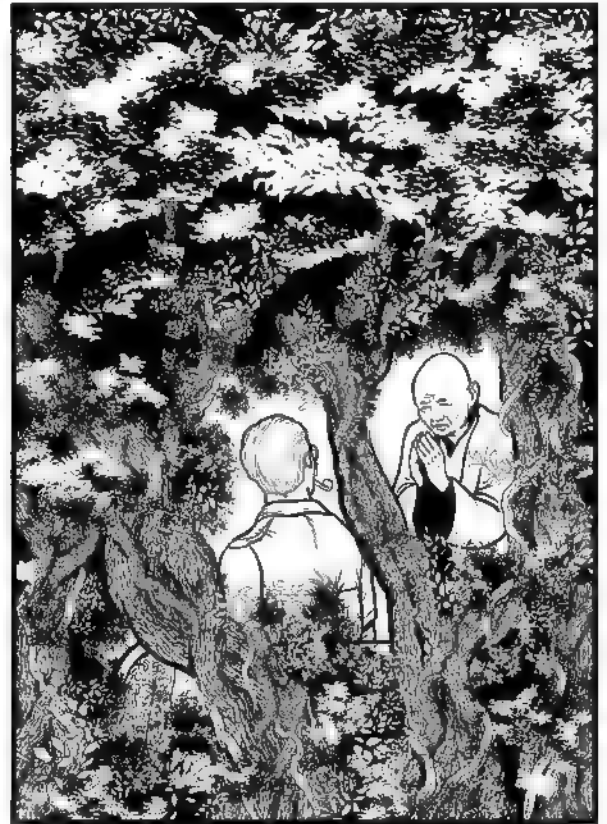
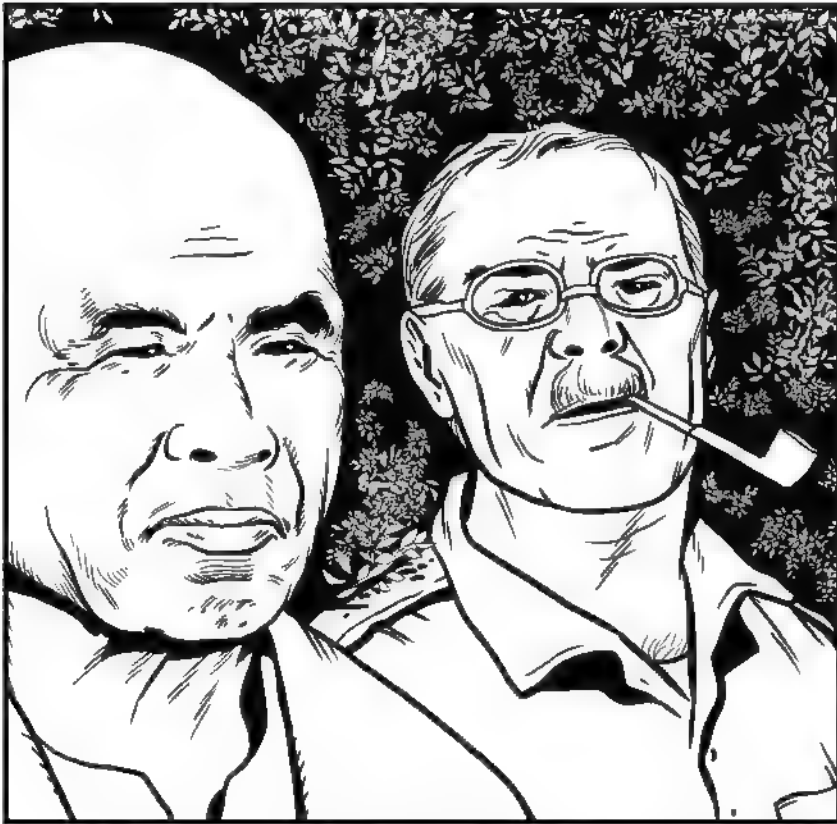
22. I asked him again if this "True-Man" might manifest in the flesh and walk the earth but was only greeted with a long silence.

23. Finally he spoke: "Due to recent signs and omens, we have come to the conclusion that mankind has become too far out of sync with the Tao."



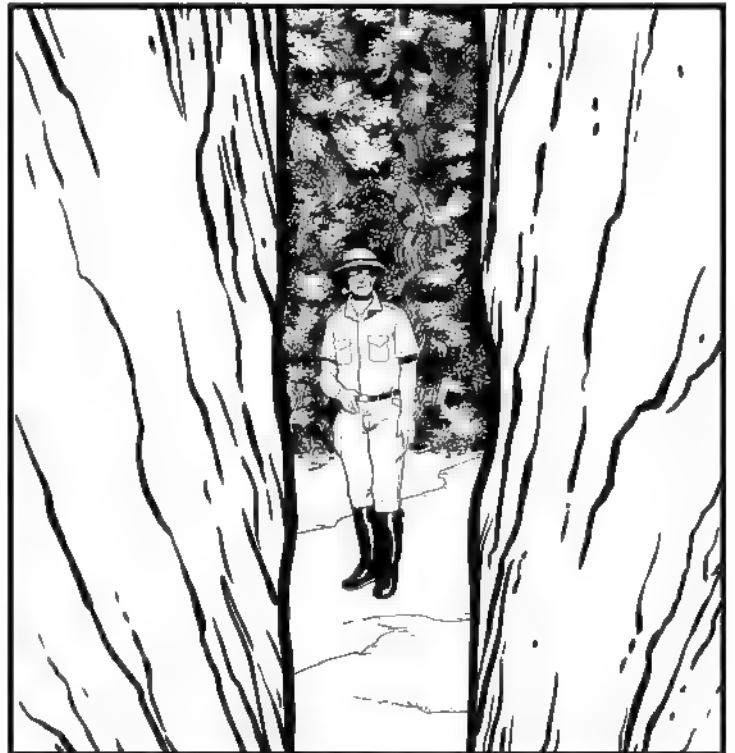
24. "There is a denial of the Tao by those who would rule us" he said, "and in those who send their armies to lay waste to the land."

25. His great fear was that these deniers, and I think he means us, would somehow seek to enslave the "True-Man" and thus unknowingly split the Tao into separate light and dark components .



26. He spoke of the need for a great sacrificial act; something that would shock the world back into relationship with the Tao.

27. "The "True-Man" is our own shadow in the celestial fire." he said. "He seeks to show himself now."



28. As he prepared to leave I again asked if the spirit of the Tao could possibly manifest in the physical world. He smiled and said "Look around you."

29. I was left alone to ponder his words. And how a colossal granite Buddha could mysteriously split down the center like a stick of cordwood.

30. With my coolie on double time I was back in Saigon by early evening. The old colonial city aglow in the Autumn light, it's elegant shaded streets bustling. Normally happy expressions of citizens visibly clouded with foreboding.

31. I guess they should be on edge with what we've got planned for them.



32. Spent the night conferring with Special Agent Barleycorn, going over what my continuing inquiries had turned up about the creature.

33. On the surface, Taoism sounds like mystical claptrap. Notions of a "True-Man" lurking in a "Celestial Fire" are what you scare schoolchildren with.



34. On the other hand, Uppenheimer theorized creature is a visitor from a higher dimension. And Jung's counsel was that such a being could consist of pure collective consciousness.

35. Finally dropped off to sleep and into recurring nightmare of being strangled by an infinite linked chain. This time the dream added a fresh element.

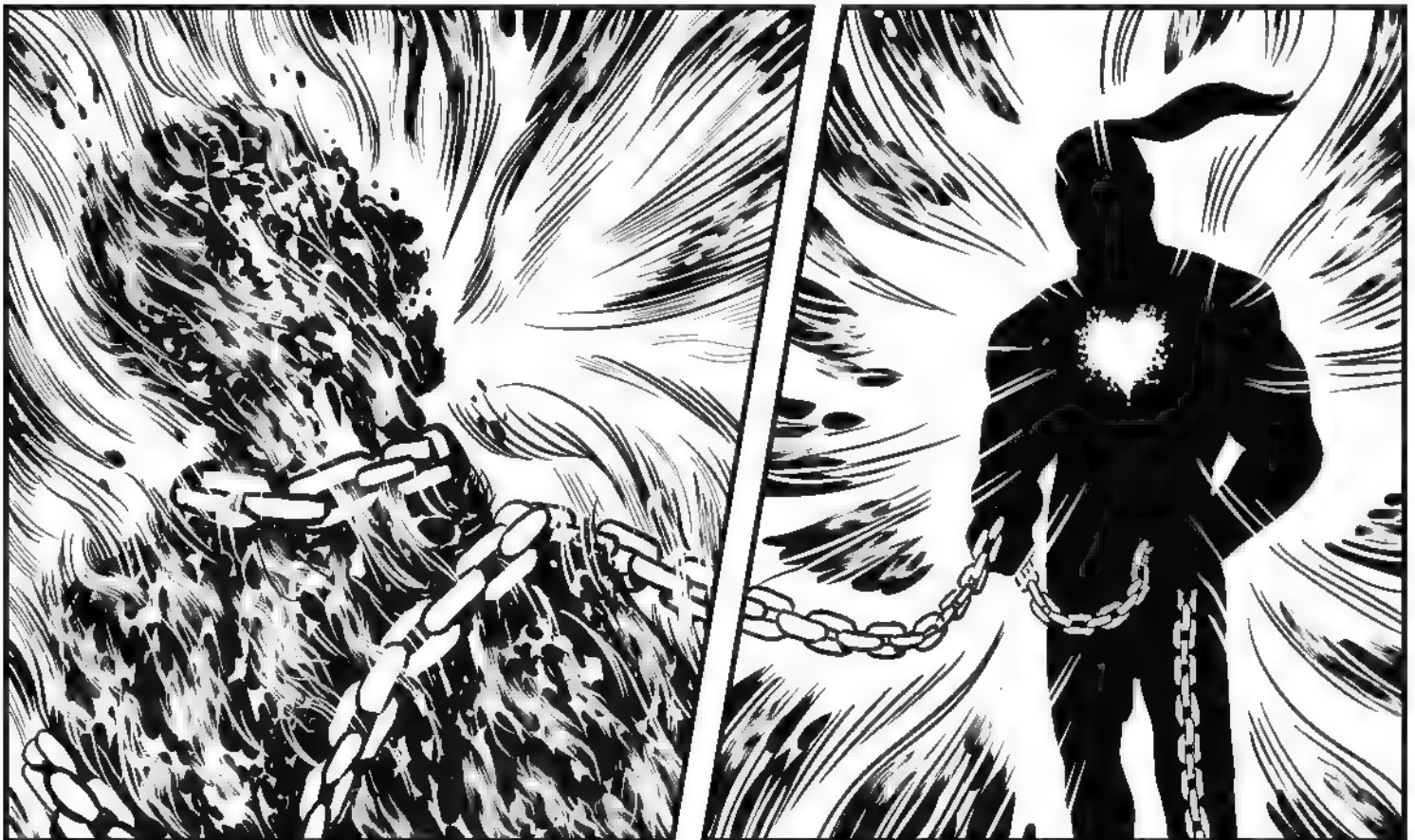


36. This time there was fire and I was being pulled inexorably into it.



37. I felt my skin burn away and my lungs blister with each frantic gulp of blast furnace heat.

38: Just before my eyes exploded I saw him. He was standing at the heart of the raging inferno, a shadowy muscular shape with a peculiar top knot.



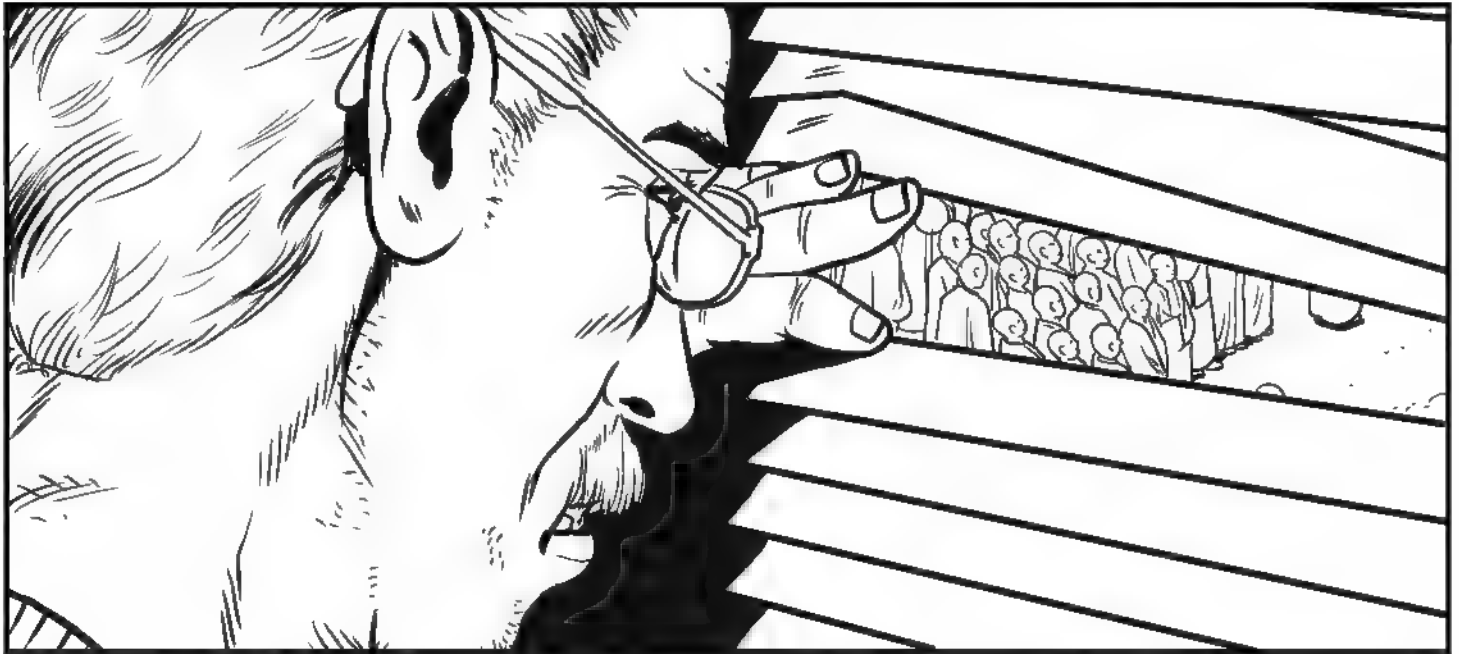
39. He was holding the chain.

40. I confess I've never been so glad to awaken from a dream in my life.



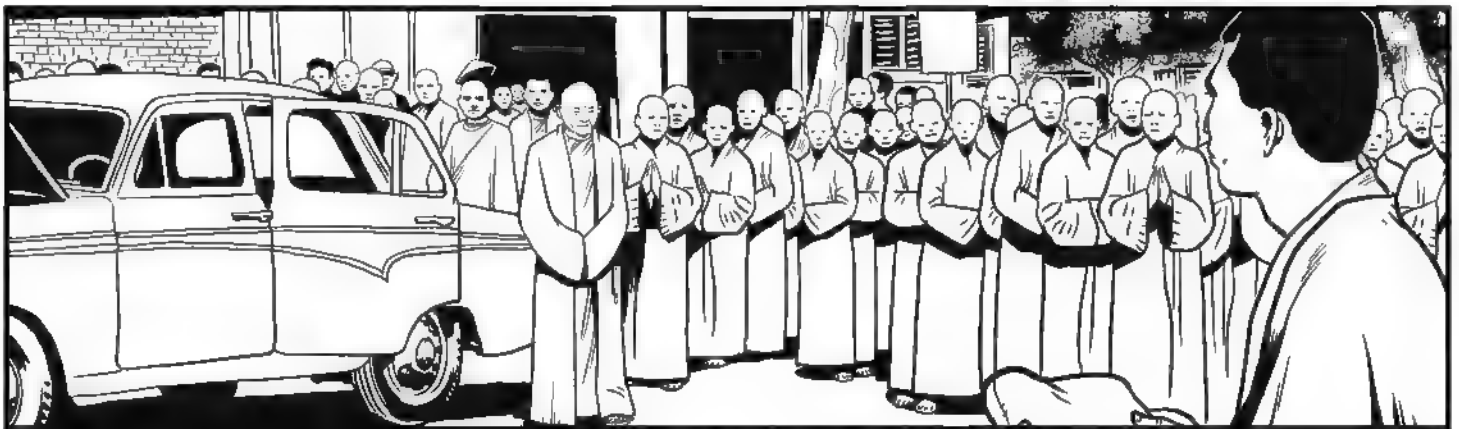
41. I only mention this personal experience because of what occurred immediately afterwards.

42. There was a large crowd gathering in the street outside the embassy.



43. Hundreds of Buddhist monks were preparing for some sort of demonstration. At first I assumed it was another protest against the Diem regime.

44. A car arrived and out stepped Thich Quang Duc, the same Taoist monk I'd interviewed the day before. A camera crew was setting up.



45. He walked into the middle of the street in front of the embassy and sat in a lotus position. Then a helper poured five gallons of gasoline over him.

46. He seemed completely at ease as he recited some sort of Buddhist prayer. As he raised a match, cameras were rolling.



47. When I realized what he was up to I screamed perhaps a little too loud and frantically.

48. It didn't matter. Thich Quang Duc struck the match.



49. As the flames consumed him the cameras recorded it all. His sacrificial self immolation will be on Cronkite tonight.

50. And in that boiling cauldron I swear I saw the same figure I had glimpsed in my nightmare. It rose like some shadowy primeval spirit in a Celestial Fire.



51. Recommendation: I sense we are entering a new phase of the Project. Need for immediate defensive planning and action to protect our global assets.

52. And our private souls as well.

WASHINGTON D.C.
SEPTEMBER 29, 1963

THANKS FOR
COMING IN,
SID.

I UNDERSTAND
YOU HAVE SOME
INFORMATION
FOR US?

YEAH. I
HAPPEN TO
KNOW WHERE
YOUR BOY
SPIEGAL'S
GONE TO
GROUND.

BUT IT'S
GONNA'
COST YOU.

FINDING THE CREATURE
AND BRINGING IT UNDER
CONTROL IS THIS NATION'S
NUMBER ONE STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE.

NAME
YOUR
PRICE,
SID.

JIGGS TELLS ME YOU GUYS
ARE GOING TO BE MAKING A MOVE
SOON. MAYBE **RESHUFFLING THE
DECK** IN TERMS OF WHO'S IN
CHARGE DOWN HERE.

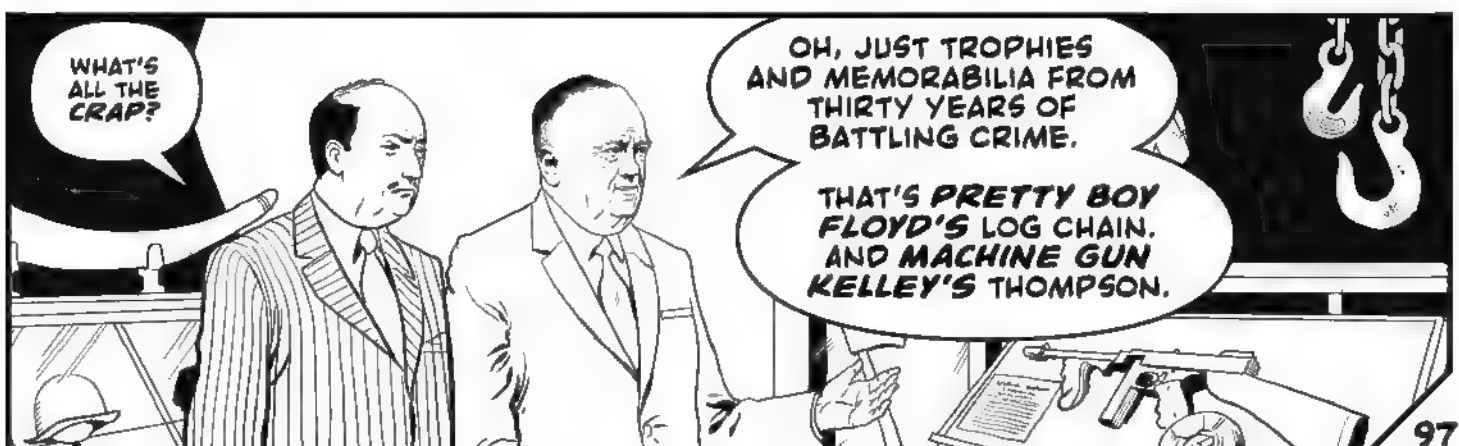
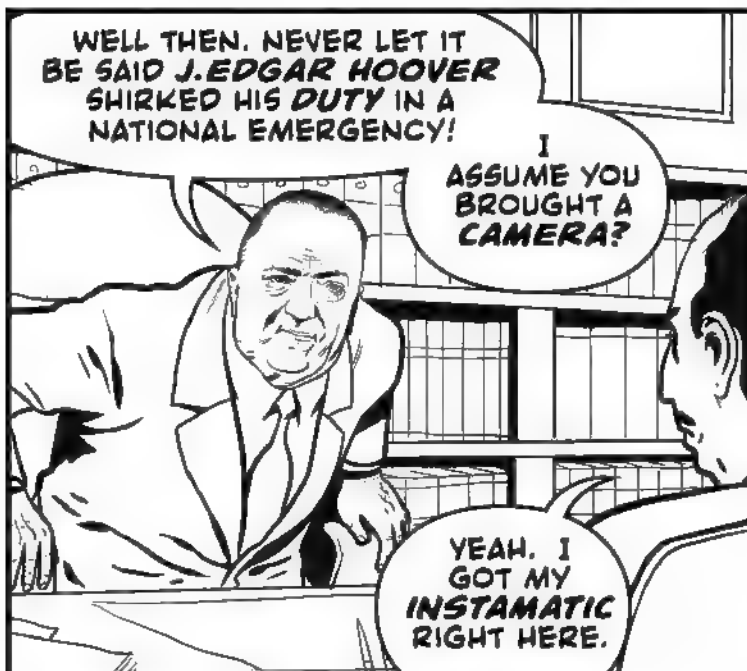
I WANT IN.

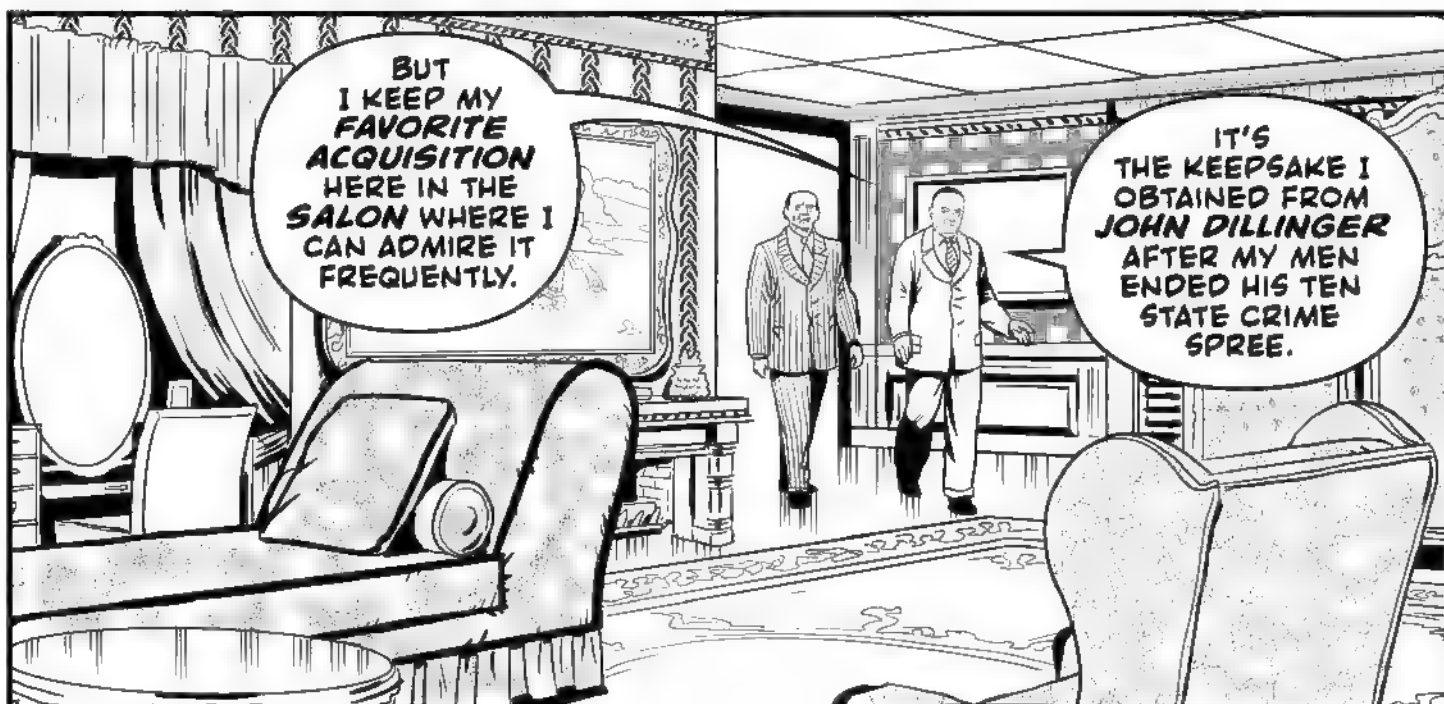
WELL, I
THINK IT'S
ABOUT **DAMN
TIME** YOU HAD A
SEAT AT THE
TABLE, SID.

CONSIDER IT
DONE. BUT **TIME**
IS OF THE ESSENCE
IN THIS MATTER.
**WHERE CAN WE
LOCATE JERRY
SPIEGAL?**

NOT SO FAST.
YOU PROMISED
ME A SLICE OF THE
PIE ONCE **BEFORE**.
BUT ALL I GOT WAS
CRUMBS.

**THIS
TIME I'M
GONNA' NEED
INSURANCE.**





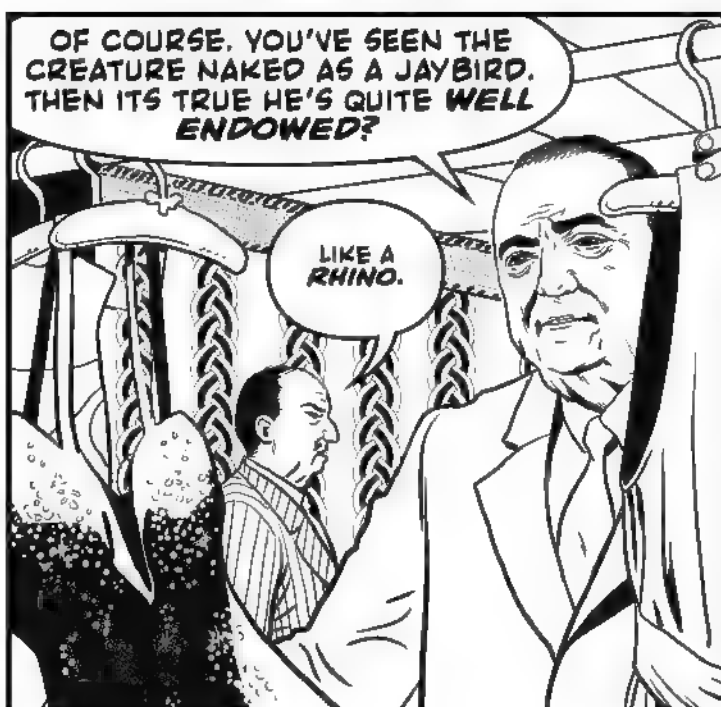
BUT
I KEEP MY
FAVORITE
ACQUISITION
HERE IN THE
SALON WHERE I
CAN ADMIRE IT
FREQUENTLY.

IT'S
THE KEEPSAKE I
OBTAINED FROM
JOHN DILLINGER
AFTER MY MEN
ENDED HIS TEN
STATE CRIME
SPREE.



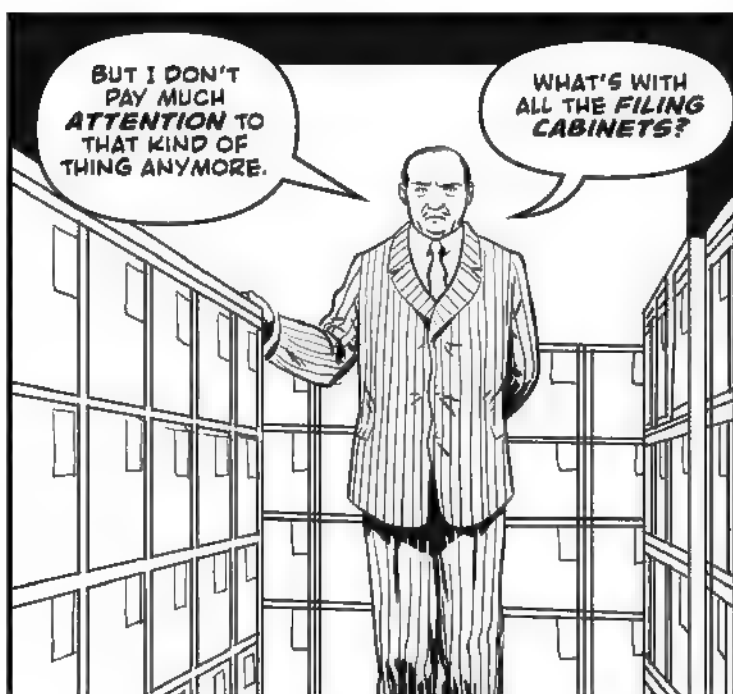
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF *THAT*
MONSTER? THEY SAY HE COULD
SWIPE *TEN* HALF DOLLARS OFF
THE BAR WITH IT.

EH.
I SEEN
BIGGER.



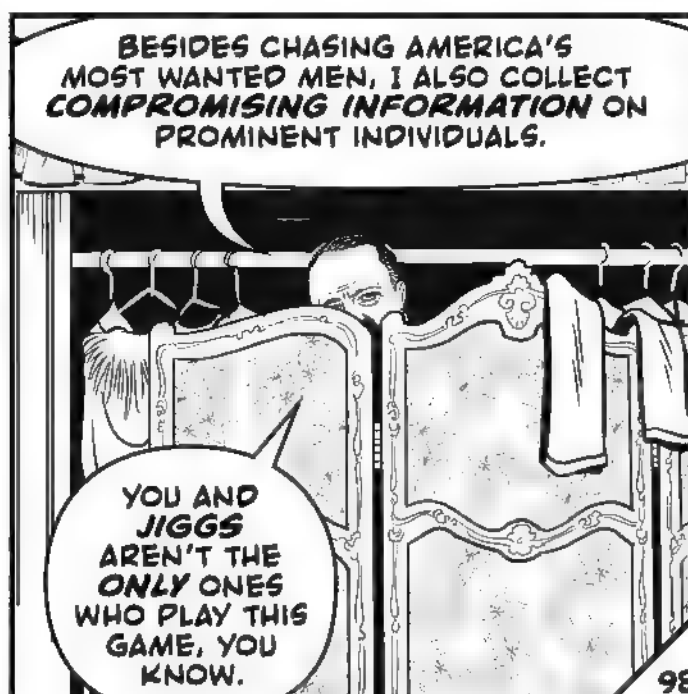
OF COURSE, YOU'VE SEEN THE
CREATURE NAKED AS A JAYBIRD.
THEN ITS TRUE HE'S QUITE *WELL*
ENDOWED?

LIKE A
RHINO.



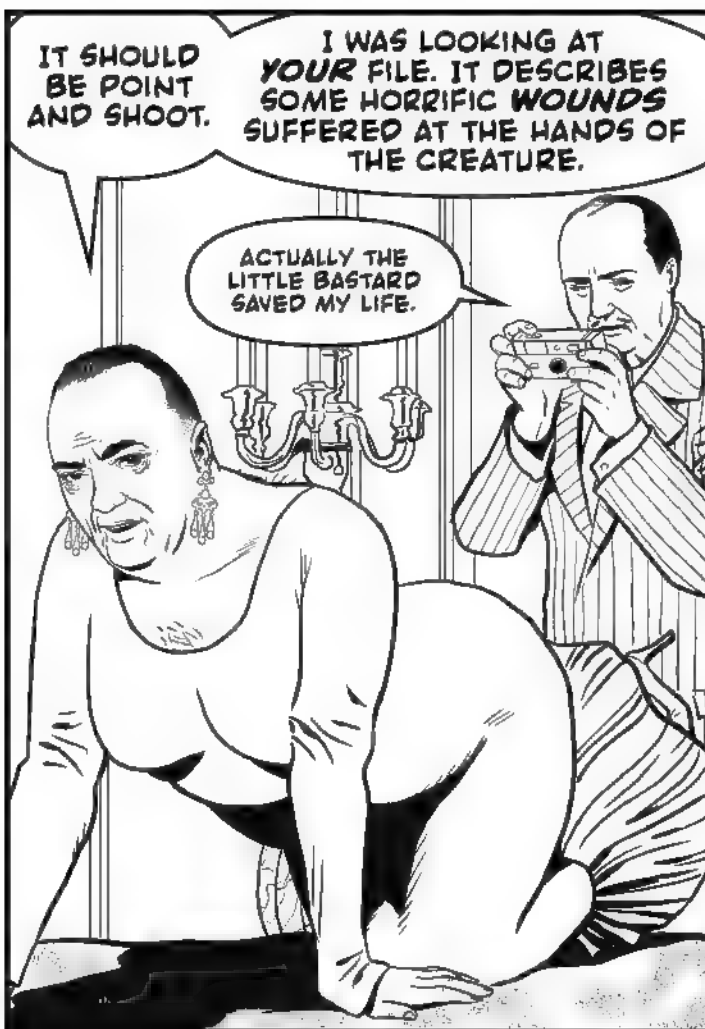
BUT I DON'T
PAY MUCH
ATTENTION TO
THAT KIND OF
THING ANYMORE.

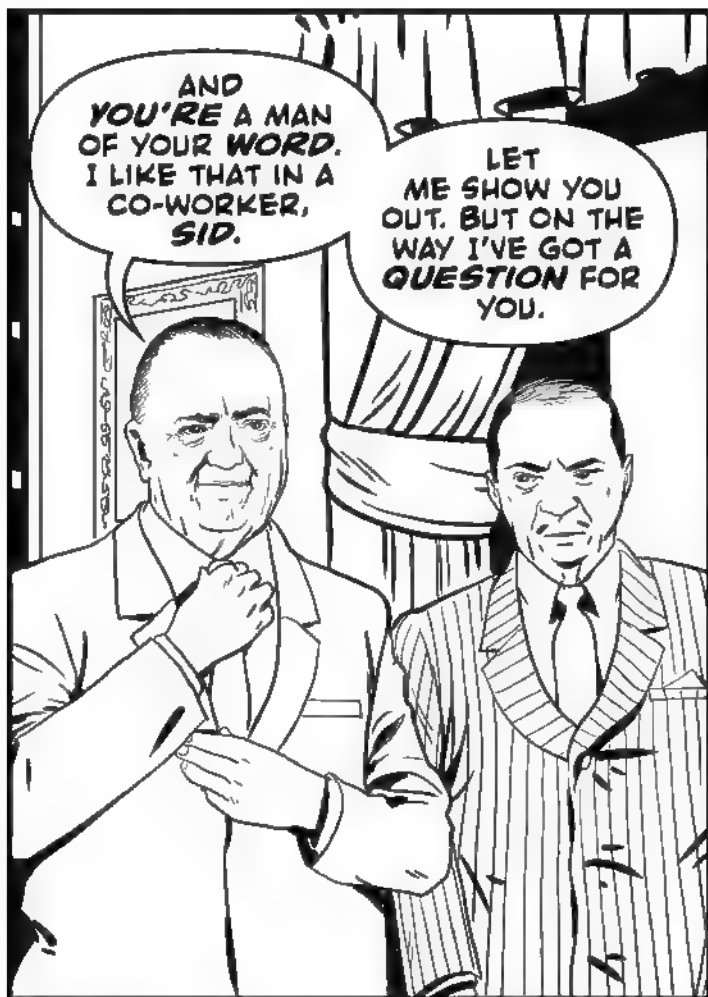
WHAT'S WITH
ALL THE FILING
CABINETS?



BESIDES CHASING AMERICA'S
MOST WANTED MEN, I ALSO COLLECT
COMPROMISING INFORMATION ON
PROMINENT INDIVIDUALS.

YOU AND
JIGGS
AREN'T THE
ONLY ONES
WHO PLAY THIS
GAME, YOU
KNOW.









BUT JIGGS
--HOOVER
PROMISED ME A
SEAT AT THE **BIG**
TABLE. WITHOUT
THESE PHOTOS
I GOT NO
LEVERAGE
OVER HIM.

HE'LL
SCREW ME
LIKE HE DID
LAST TIME!



THERE
AIN'T NO
SEAT FOR YOU
AT THE **BIG**
TABLE, **SID**.



Y'GOTTA'
UNDERSTAND.
I'M DOIN' YOU
A FAVOR
HERE.

THEY WANTED TO
LIQUIDATE YOU. I
HAD TO CONVINCE
THEM YOU WOULDN'T
BE A **PROBLEM**.

JIGGS, THIS
IS WAY **BIGGER**
THAN YOU KNOW.
SEE THERE'S A **REAL**
TRUE-MAN. THE **FEDS**
GOT A **SECRET**
PROGRAM AND...



DON'T WORRY. YOU'LL
STILL BE ABLE TO PUBLISH
YOUR **FUNNY BOOKS**. AND
MAYBE IF YOU'RE A **GOOD**
SOLDIER YOU GET YOUR
STUDIO BACK.

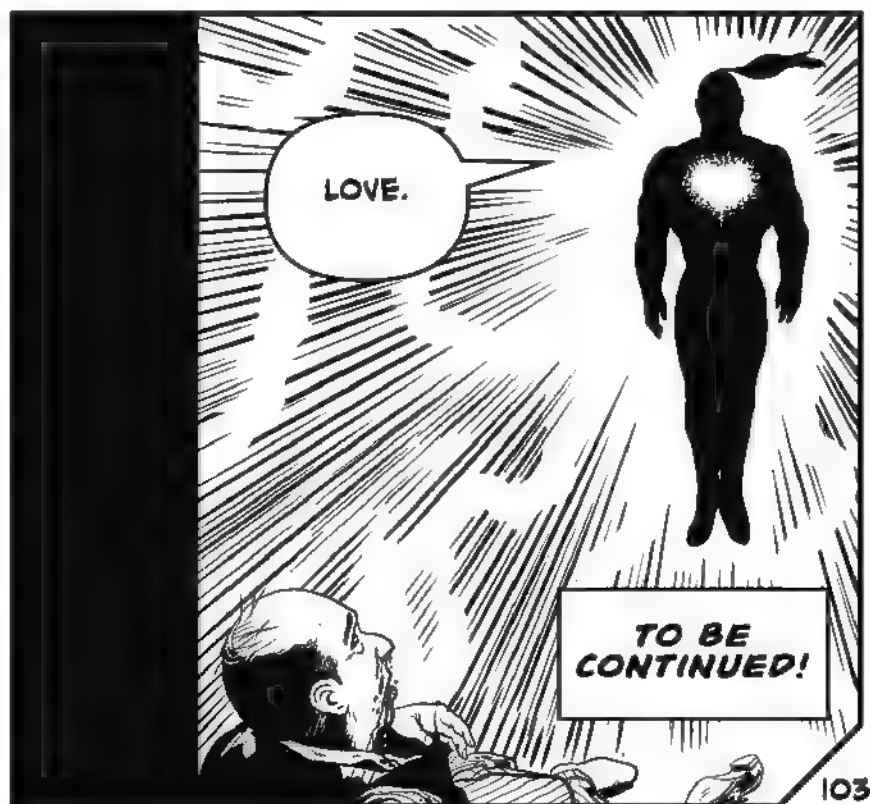
HE'S MY
CHARACTER,
JIGGS! I
OWN HIM!

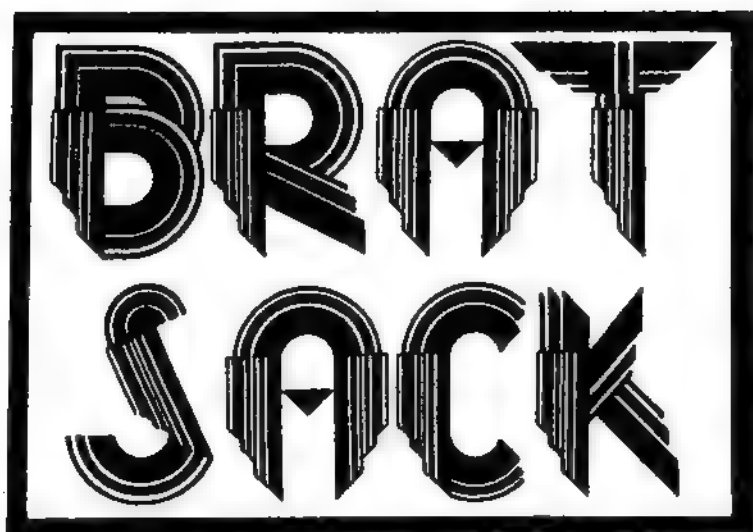


GIMME MY
FUCKIN'
CAMERA!

BRUNO,
GET US
OUTTA
HERE!

YEAH,
JIGGS.





MAXIMUSINGS!

Hello again. Thanks for joining me in this new chapter of the *King Hell Heroica*. I'm most grateful to have found a way to keep *Maximortal* going. It's a saga that's been rattling around in my brain for almost thirty years! Business and finances and general craziness has long conspired to keep me from finishing the damn thing but the stars have now aligned and I've got a full head of steam (to mix my metaphors). Sorry I can't pump it out on a monthly schedule like in the old days, but I'm real comfortable taking the time it needs to get it right.

It's looking like there will four issues of *Boy Maximortal* at fifty or so pages per. These will ultimately be collected in Volume 2 of the *King Hell Heroica*. Volume 1 of the *Heroica*, titled *The Maximortal*, is now available on Amazon.

And Volume 4 of the *Heroica*, titled *Brat Pack*, has just been rereleased in a lovely expanded hardcover edition by *IDW*. Under editor *Scott Dunbier*, this version of *Brat Pack* includes a big bunch of extra art from the *Tundra* days. That was a time when we could try all kinds of wacky

merchandising tricks to get the books noticed. Also included is my original proposal for the series and an essay by me discussing its genesis and history. Not many people know it, but *Brat Pack* was originally going to published by *DC Comics*!

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, *Brat Pack* has been translated and released in hardcover by French publisher *Delirium*. And the big news is *Delirium* will be translating and publishing Volume One of the *Heroica*, *The Maximortal*, in a color edition this year.

I should also mention that my early revisionist superhero series, *The One*, also gets the deluxe hardcover treatment from *IDW* with all new color by *Kracklin' Kirby Veitch*, who's palette wizardry helped me attain the color effects I could only imagine when I originally did the series for *Epic* in 1984. *The One* is not part of the *King Hell Heroica* continuity, but it's definitely as *Veitchian* as it gets.

MY BACK PAGES

One of the interesting quirks of *Print-On-Demand* is that the price of printing is not dependent on page count. It costs the same to print a 50 page book as one with one hundred and eight pages. I see this as an opportunity to run some of my stuff from a lifetime of making art; especially pieces and stories that are normally not seen. And in the process create a nice fat package that's a good deal for the reader. As I mentioned last issue, expect the unexpected. Here's a quick rundown of what you'll find back there.

Belief & Technique for Modern Prose; List of Essentials by Jack Kerouac. This beat up photocopy, sent to me by Ken Viola, is taped into one of my old sketchbooks.

Baby Tarzan and Kala. Done for a special sketched hardcover collection of Joe Kubert's Tarzan work.

Constantine commission.

Penguins of the Antarctic. For PBS Nature Comics based on the Nature television series.

Rebus: In 1979, trying to break into the New York comics industry, I got a try out story from Warren Magazines which I failed. They gave me back the art and that was that. So I took the story into an experimental dimension hoping to have Heavy Metal or Epic pick it up. Epic almost did but ultimately no go. This is the first time it's ever seen print.

Fifteen illustrations for Sharon Tate: A Life by Ed Sanders. The book is excellent but the publishers shrunk my illustrations down to baseball card size, which was disheartening. So I'm very pleased I've got a place to present them as originally envisioned.

Sounds In The Silence: Another PBS Nature comic. This one is a fictional warning about what might happen to the world if all the bees disappear.

Cover to Hero! Comics #12, 1966

Miracleman commission.

Adam Strange Commission

Kasha Varniskes. Me turning a poem by Ed Sanders into a one page comic.

A Visitor In White. A Sherlock Holmes short story I wrote as a gift for my wife Cindy.

Greyshirt commission.

MORE NEWS

By the time you read this it will have been announced that I am to be installed as the new *Cartoonist Laureate for the State of Vermont*. I'm proud of my home state for elevating and celebrating my favorite art form and humbled to follow Ed Koren and Alison Bechdel as its third *Laureate*. That's Alison and I below, jamming on the traditional *Cartoonist Laureate* hand-off illustration. If I start acting more pompous than usual please slap me upside the head.

See you next issue!



BELEEF & TECHNIQUE FOR MODERN PAINTERS

List of Essentials

1. Scribbled secret notebooks, and wild typewritten pages, for yr. own joy.
2. Submissive to everything, open, listening.
3. Try never get drunk outside yr. own house.
4. Be in love with yr. life.
5. Something that you feel will find its own form.
6. Be crazy dumb saint of the mind.
7. Blow as deep as you want to blow.
8. Write what you want bottomless from bottom of the mind.
9. The unspeakable visions of the individual.
10. No time for poetry but exactly what is.
11. Visionary tics shivering in the chest.
12. In tranced fixation dreaming upon object before you.
13. Remove literary, grammatical and syntactical inhibition.
14. Like Proust be an old teahead of time.
15. Telling the true story of the world in interior monolog.
16. The jewel center of interest is the eye within the eye.
17. Write in recollection and amazement for yourself.
18. Work from pithy middle eye out, swimming in language sea.
19. Accept loss forever.
20. Believe in the holy contour of life.
21. Struggle to sketch the flow that already exists intact in mind.
22. Dont think of words when you stop but to see picture better.
23. Keep track of every day the date emblazoned in yr. morning.
24. No fear of shame in the dignity of yr. experience, language & knowledge.
25. Write for the world to read and see yr. exact pictures of it.
26. Bookmovie is the movie in words, the visual American form.
27. In Praise of Character in the Bleak inhuman Loneliness.
28. Composing wild, undisciplined, pure, coming in from under, crazier the better.
29. You're a Genius all the time.
30. Writer-Director of Earthly movies Sponsored & Angeled in Heaven.



MY BACK PAGES

Sketches, Comix and Illustrations
1966 - 2017



PENGUINS of the ANTARCTIC

ANTARCTICA... A LAND OF SNOW AND WINDS...

...OF AN ICE CAP THAT IN SOME LOCATIONS IS TWO MILES DEEP, AND WHERE THE COMING OF WINTER MEANS THE COLD WILL BE GETTING EVER COLDER...

ANTARCTICA... THE CONTINENT OF THE PENGUINS...

Adapted by MARK EVANIER
Illustrated by RICK VEITCH
Lettered by TODD KLEIN

SUMMER IS ALREADY GIVING WAY TO THE LONG WINTER...

THE FIRST STORMS OF AUTUMN ARE BUT A WARNING... A REMINDER TO THE SURVIVAL INSTINCT OF WHAT CAN AND WILL SOON OCCUR...

WINDS OF 90 MILES PER HOUR... TEMPERATURES THAT REACH SO BELOW...

THEY ARE AMONG THE REASONS THE KING PENGUINS ALL KNOW BY INSTINCT: IT IS TIME TO HEAD FOR THE NORTH...

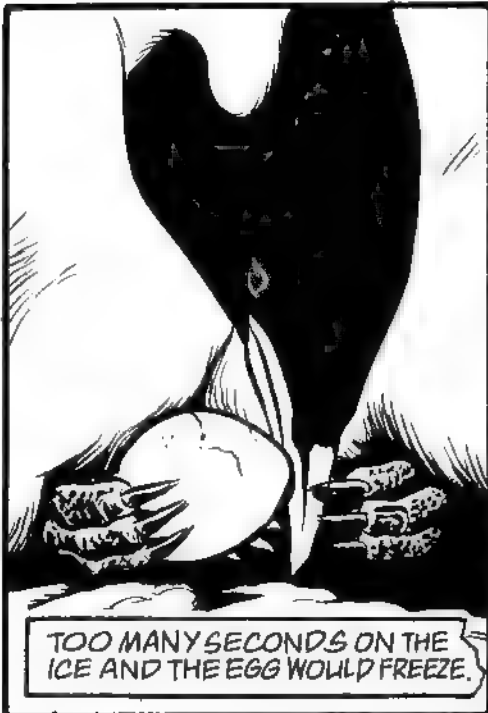
...WHERE IT WILL NOT BE WARM BUT IT MAY BE SURVIVABLE.

THAT IS WHEN THE FEMALE EMPEROR PENGUIN LAYS AN EGG...

...ONE EGG FROM EACH PENGUIN COUPLE. BUT THE FEMALE IS NOT ABOUT TO BROOD THE EGG TO HATCH...

THAT WILL BE THE FATHER'S JOB.

ONE OF THE MOST PRECARIOUS PARTS OF THE WHOLE PROCESS IS THE **HANDOFF...**



TOO MANY SECONDS ON THE ICE AND THE EGG WOULD FREEZE.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED: THE FATHER'S FEET KEEP THE EGG ELEVATED OFF THE FROZEN GROUND...



...WHILE THE EGG IS SNUGGLED UNDER FOLDS OF SKIN FOR WARMTH.

PRODUCING SUCH A BIG EGG HAS TAKEN A LOT OUT OF THE MOTHER. SHE NEEDS TO GO TO SEA...

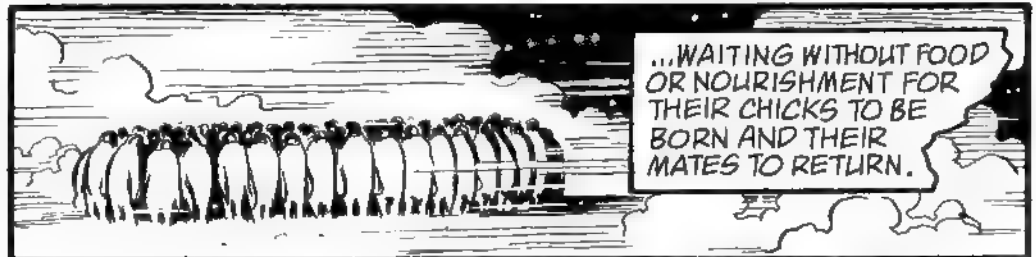
SO SHE AND HUNDREDS LIKE HER HEAD FOR A BREAK IN THE ICE THAT MAY NOT BE THERE FOR LONG...



...AND SOON, THEY ARE IN THE PART OF THE WORLD WHERE THEY FEEL MOST AT HOME...



FOR WEEKS AND MONTHS OF SNOW AND ICE, THE FATHERS HUDDLE TOGETHER, KEEPING THE EGGS OFF THE FROZEN GROUND, KEEPING THE EGGS WARM...



...WAITING WITHOUT FOOD OR NOURISHMENT FOR THEIR CHICKS TO BE BORN AND THEIR MATES TO RETURN.

FINALLY, THERE IS A DAY WITH A HINT OF SUNSHINE HERE IN ANTARCTICA AND THE MOTHER RETURNS...



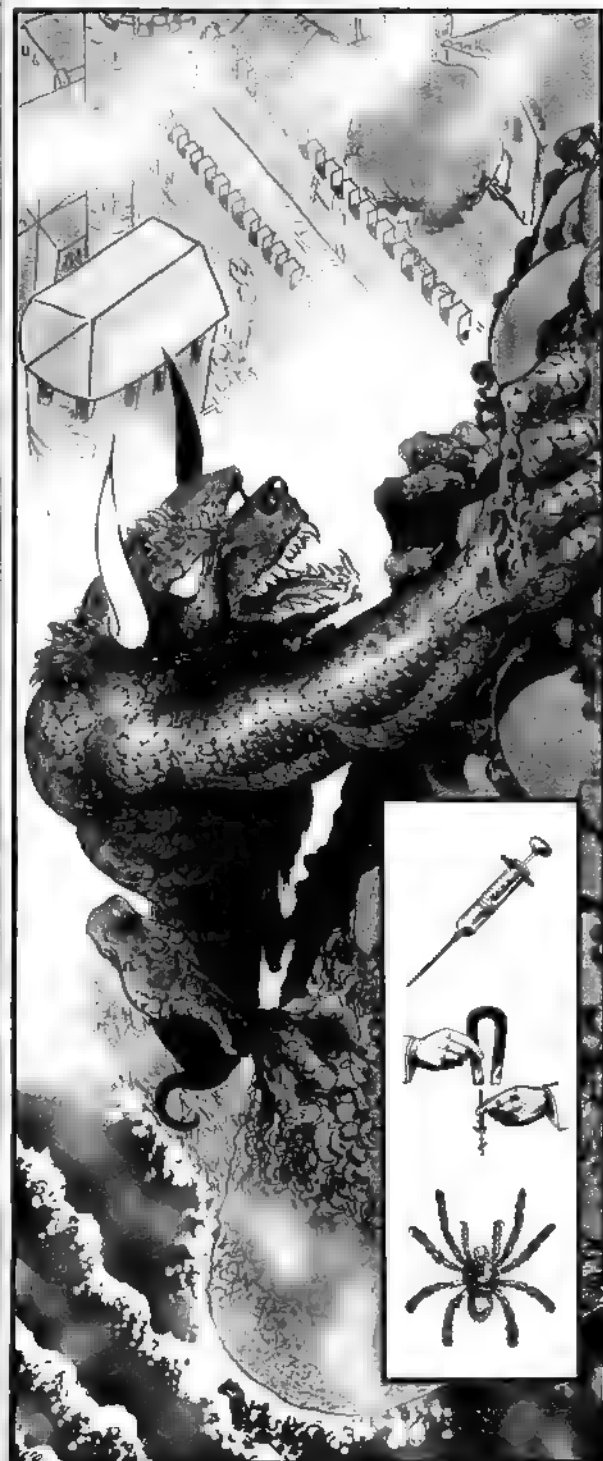
THEY CELEBRATE THEIR SURVIVAL, THEY CELEBRATE THEIR REUNION AND THEY CELEBRATE THEIR NEW CHICK...

THERE ARE MONTHS BEFORE THE PROCESS WILL BEGIN ANEW.



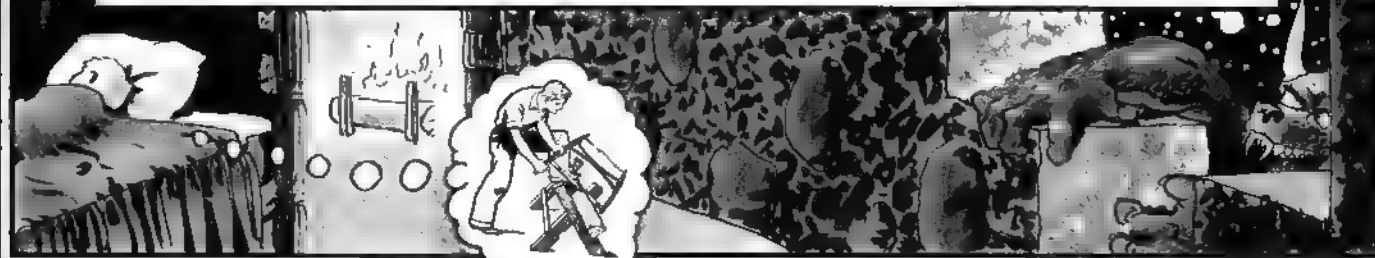
THE END

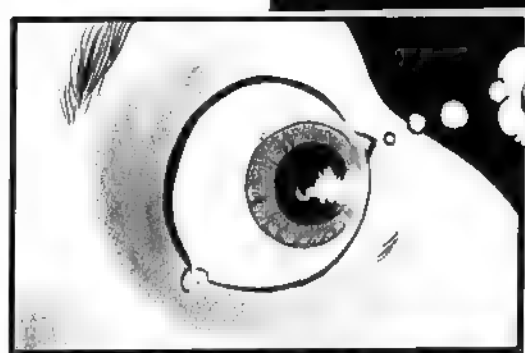
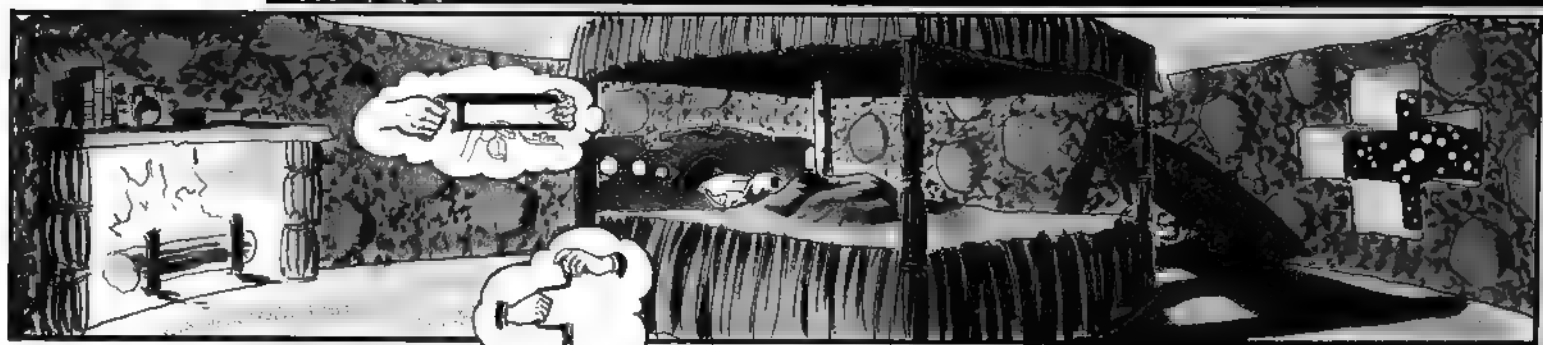


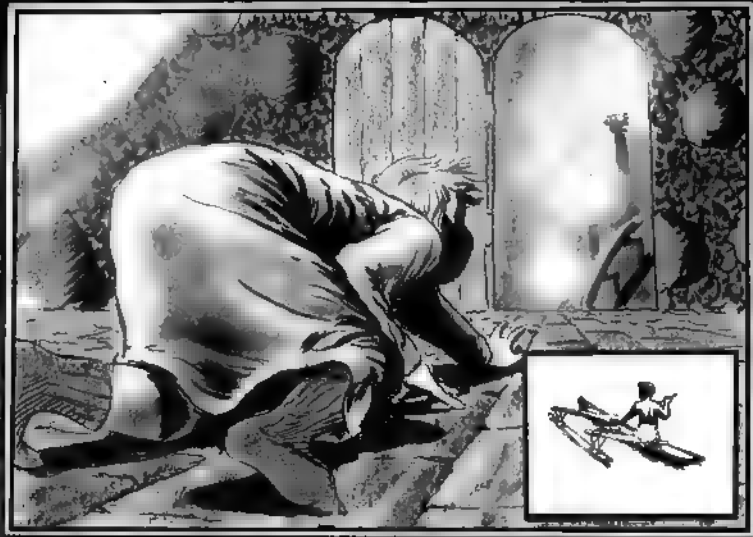
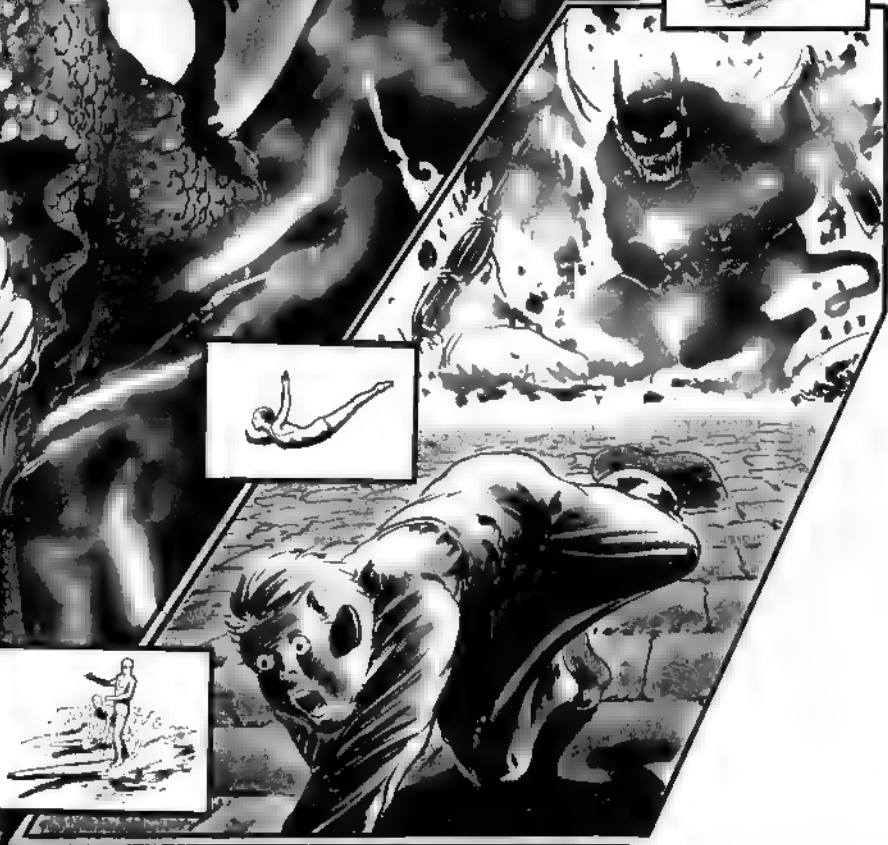
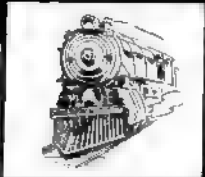


NEOVS

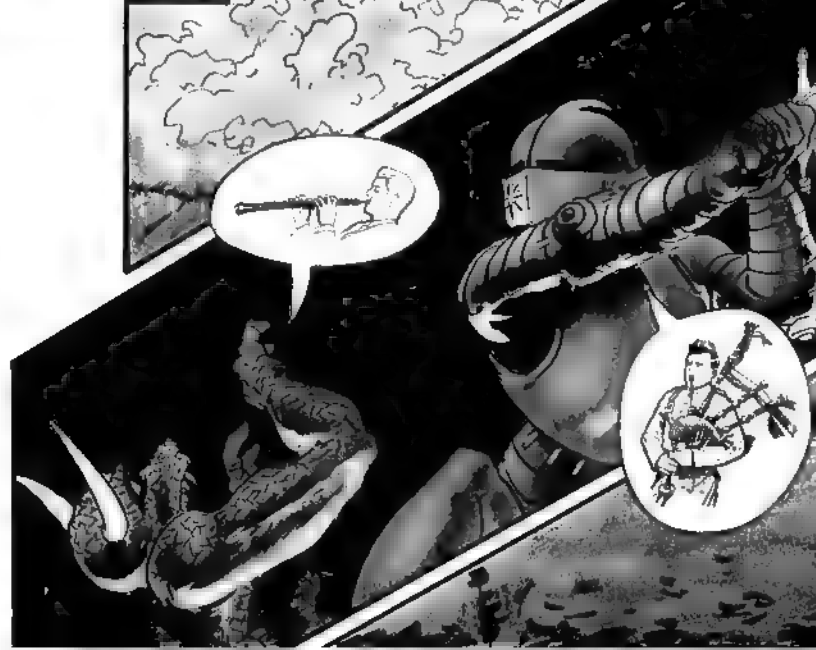
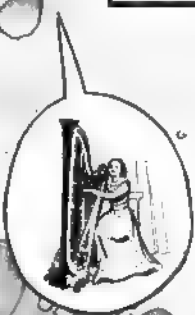
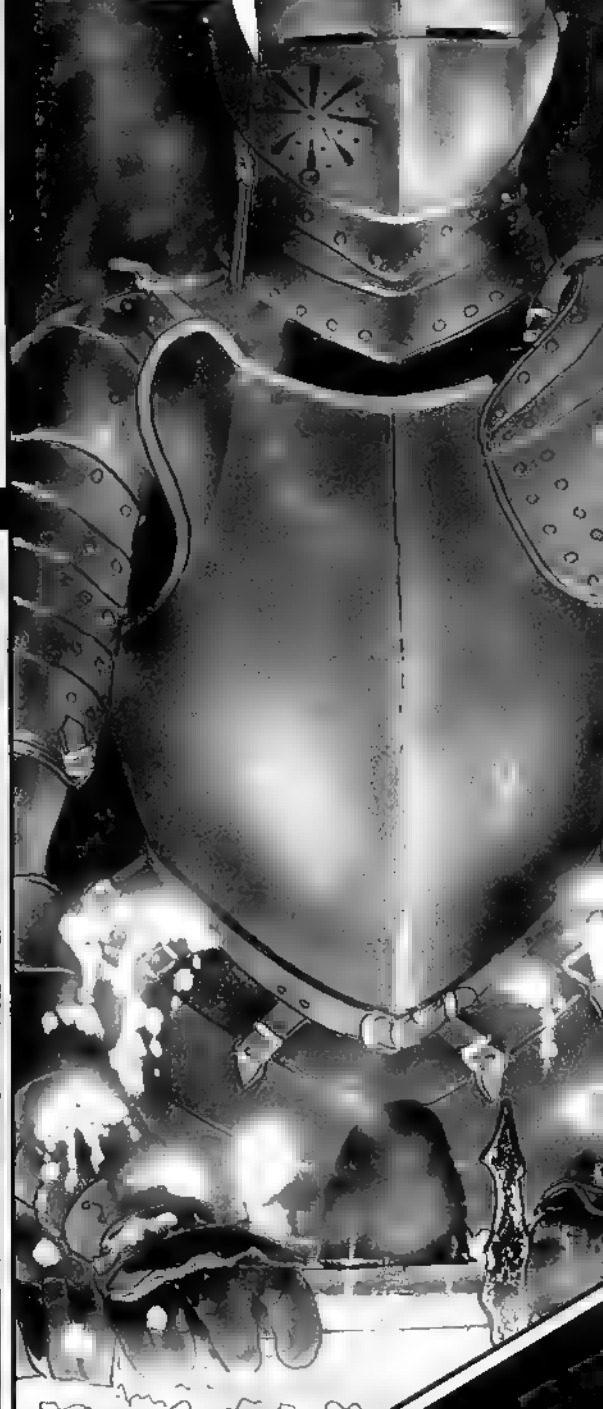
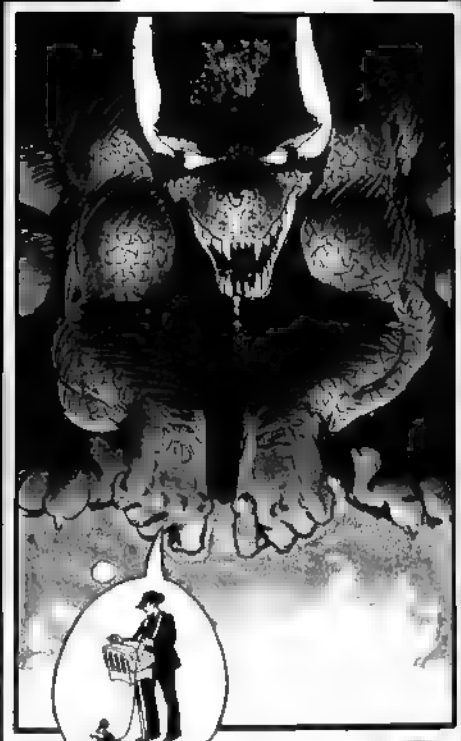
RICH VEINCH

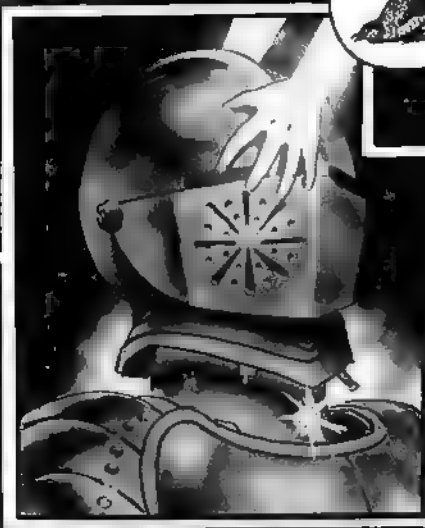
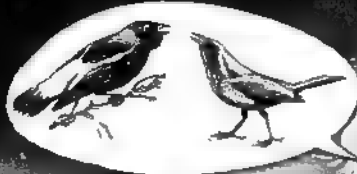












MELCH 29

Illustrations for
Sharon Tate: A Life

by Ed Sanders
Da Capo 2015



Sharon and her Mom



Modeling for Dad



Sharon and Phillippe



Man From Uncle



The Fearless Vampire Hunters



No make-up



Valley of the Dolls



Rosemary's Baby



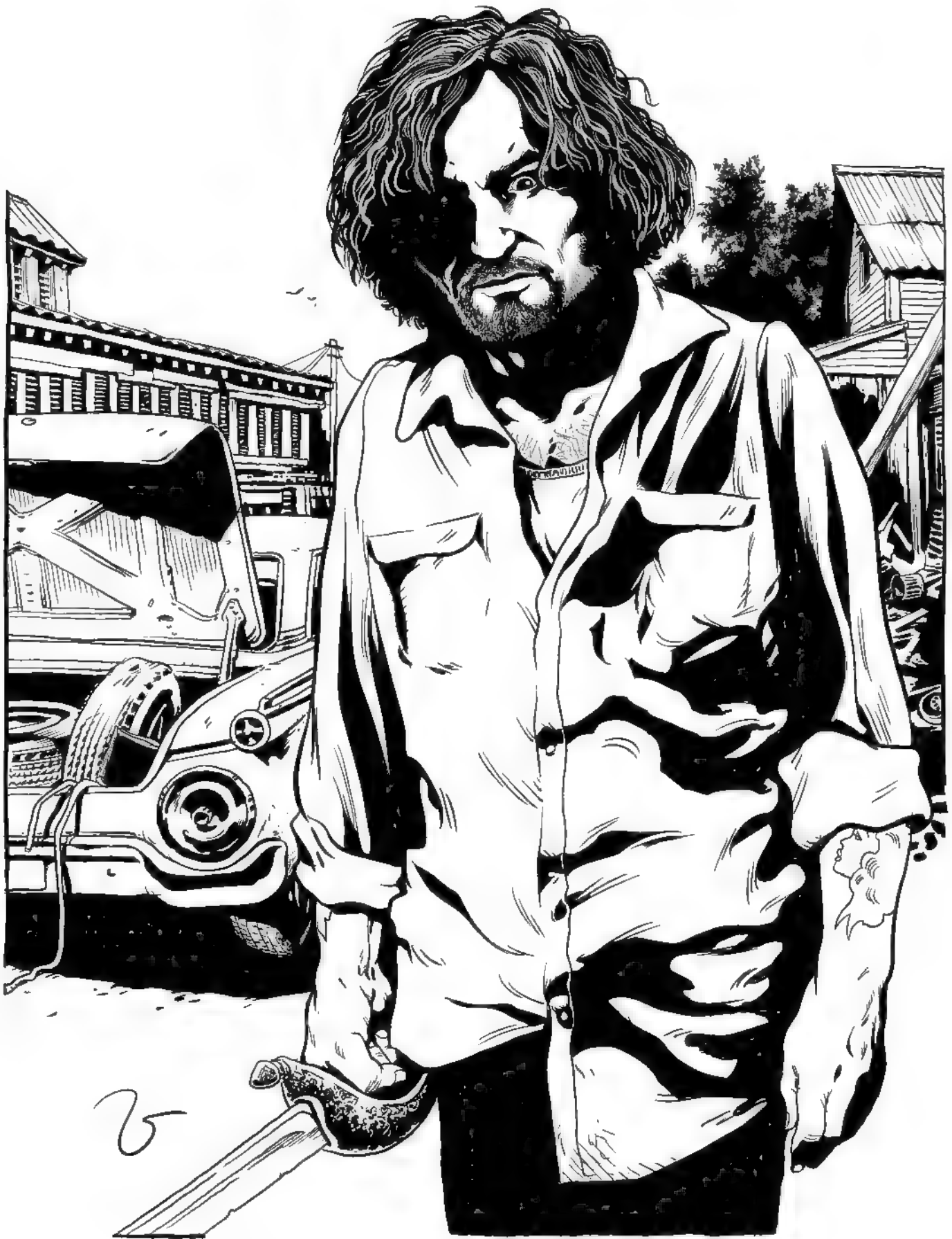
Modeling



Sharon with Jay



Pregnant



Charlie Manson



Tex cuts the wires




Murder scene




Sharon and Paul's grave

SOUNDS IN THE SILENCE



IN THOSE DAYS, THE OLD MAN SEEMED TO CARRY THE WHOLE WORLD ON HIS SHOULDERS.

IT WAS AS IF HE BLAMED HIMSELF FOR EVERYTHING THAT HAD HAPPENED.



EVEN SO, WE LOVED HIM DEARLY.



HE TAUGHT US ABOUT FLOWERS.

HOW EVERYTHING CHANGED WHEN THEY ALL SUDDENLY VANISHED.



AND WHY.

WE'D ALL BEEN **LONERS**, SCAVENGING FOR FOOD IN THE **GREAT RUINS**, BEFORE JOINING HIS CLAN.

I'D NEVER ACTUALLY HEARD
A HONEY BEE IN THE WILD,
MUCH LESS SEEN ONE.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY MY
HEART WAS POUNDING
WHEN I TRIED TO
COLLECT IT.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY
I DIDN'T HEAR THE
LONER SNEAKING UP.

GET YOUR
THIEVIN' HANDS OFF
MY DRIPPER!

AHH!

SWOP!

THAT'S A BEE,
YOU DORK!

I'VE GOT TO
CATCH IT AND BRING
IT TO THE OLD MAN!

WELL, YOU
CAN'T. THIS IS
MY PATCH.

EVERYTHIN'
AROUND THE
STADIUM
BELONGS
TO ME.

A
LONER,
HUH? NO
CLAN?

I LIKE BEIN'
ON MY OWN. WHAT'S
IT TO YA?

WHAT WERE YOU
TRY'NA STEAL? SOMETHIN'
EDIBLE?

I WAS
COLLECTING
POLLEN.

~puff~

JUST
LIKE THE
BEE.

HEY!
OWW! AHHUH--
AHH... AHH...

THAT PARTICULAR
SPECIES IS CALLED
RAGWEED. NASTY,
ISN'T IT?

CHOOO!
AH-CHOO!
HEY... WHA-
TCHOO!



I THINK YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT THAT BEE THAN YOU'RE LETTING ON.

WHAT HAVE YOU GOT IN HERE?

HEY-- WHA-TCHOO! GET OUTTA MY... AHH-CHOOO!



WHAT'S THIS?

IT LOOKS KIND OF LIKE PICTURES I'VE SEEN IN THE OLD MAN'S BOOKS.

HAVE A HEART! HA-CHOOO! IT'S ALL I GOT TO EAT... WAA-SHOO!



COME ON. YOU NEED TO MEET MY CLAN.

I'M NOT MEETING ANYBODY. *SNIF!* AND YOU CAN'T MAKE ME.

THIS LONER GIVING YOU A PROBLEM, EDIE?



HE'S THE **STUBBORN** TYPE, ALAN.

UHHH... YOU'RE HER CLAN?

THAT'S RIGHT. WHAT SAY WE ALL TAKE A LITTLE WALK SO YOU CAN MEET THE OLD MAN?

HE'S ALWAYS KIND OF SAD. BUT YOU'LL LIKE HIM.



THE OLD MAN TAUGHT US TO RAISE GOATS AND WHICH MUSHROOMS WERE SAFE TO FORAGE.

DOES IT GET LONELY WITH NO FRIENDS?

NEVER.

WE'VE FOUND SOMETHING. IT MIGHT BE A FRUIT!

YET NOTHING EVER SEEMED TO BRIGHTEN HIS OPPRESSIVE MOOD.



PROBABLY ANOTHER PUFF BALL. BUT LET'S HAVE A LOOK.

UNTIL THE LONER BROUGHT
IN THAT LUMPY LITTLE APPLE...

YOU KNOW-- I'VE
ALWAYS FEARED I'D
NEVER SEE ONE OF
THESE AGAIN.

WHERE'D
YOU FIND
IT, SON?

WHY SHOULD I
TELL YOU? FOOD'S
HARD TO COME BY
OUT THERE IN THE
RUINS.

IT'S A TERRIBLE
SITUATION, SO WE BAND
TOGETHER TO MAKE THE
BEST OF IT.

SIT WITH US AND
SHARE WHAT WE HAVE.
ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU
LISTEN TO MY STORY.

WELL... THAT
STEW SMELLS
PRETTY GOOD.

DID YOU KNOW THAT FOOD USED TO BE
SO PLENTIFUL, SOME PEOPLE WORRIED
ABOUT GETTING FAT?

SEEMS LIKE I'VE
BEEN HUNGRY MY
WHOLE LIFE.

WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE,
NUTRITIOUS FRUITS AND
VEGETABLES WERE GROWN
ON VAST AGRICULTURAL
TRACTS AND AVAILABLE
EVERYWHERE.

I REMEMBER EATING
APPLES, PEARS, TOMATOES,
CORN. LIKE EVERYONE ELSE,
I TOOK THE MIRACLE OF
THEIR EXISTENCE FOR
GRANTED.

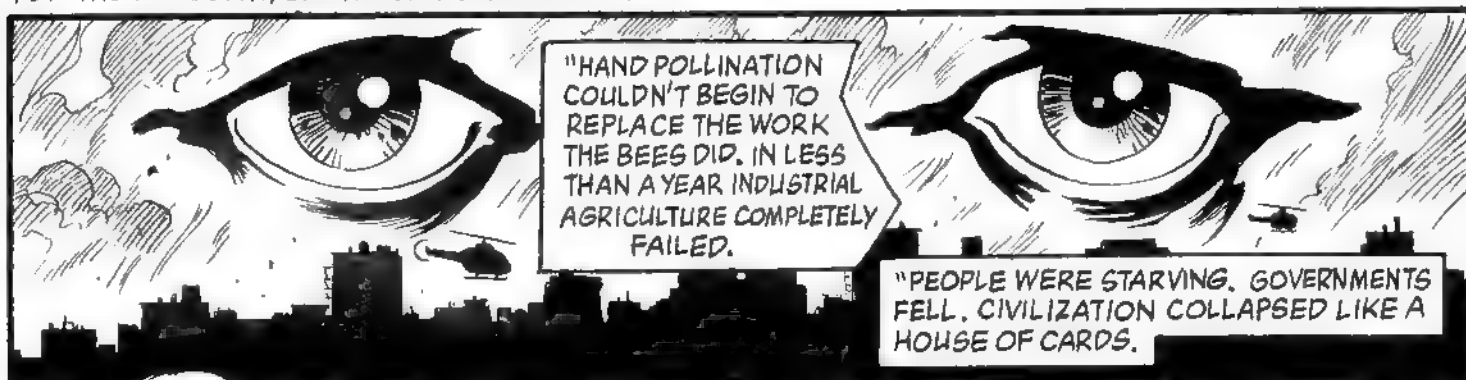
IT WAS A BOUNTY
THAT WAS PRODUCED BY
FLOWERING PLANTS, WHICH
REQUIRE POLLINATION
TO PROPAGATE.

AND IT WAS **BEES**
THAT HAD ENSURED THEIR
REPRODUCTION AND SUR-
VIVAL FOR MILLIONS
OF YEARS.

I WAS TRAINING AS
AN **APIOLOGIST**; STUDYING
HOW HIVES MIGHT BE AFFECTED
BY CLIMATE CHANGE AND
CHEMICALS IN THE
ENVIRONMENT.

THEN A
DISASTROUS COLONY
COLLAPSE DISORDER STRUCK,
WIPING OUT ALMOST ALL THE
WORLD'S BEES IN LESS
THAN A YEAR.

"I WASN'T MUCH OLDER THAN YOU AND I WAS SUDDENLY ON THE FRONT LINES. WE TRIED TO FIND A CURE FOR THE PROBLEM, BUT WE WERE TOO LATE."



"HAND POLLINATION COULDN'T BEGIN TO REPLACE THE WORK THE BEES DID. IN LESS THAN A YEAR INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE COMPLETELY FAILED."

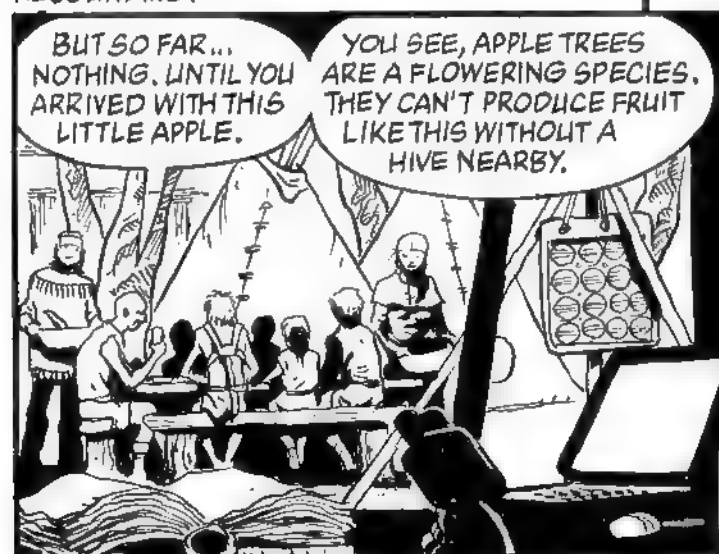
"PEOPLE WERE STARVING. GOVERNMENTS FELL. CIVILIZATION COLLAPSED LIKE A HOUSE OF CARDS."

"AFTER THE WORST, I KEPT WORKING ON MY OWN. SOMEHOW I SUCCEEDED IN BREEDING A HANDFUL OF QUEENS THAT WERE POTENTIALLY IMMUNE TO THE DISORDER."



"I SEEDED ONE HERE FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, HOPING AGAINST HOPE SHE WOULD SURVIVE TO ESTABLISH A HEALTHY HIVE."

"RELYING ON THE HELP OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELF, I'VE BEEN SEARCHING EVER SINCE FOR A SIGN THAT THE BEES MIGHT BE REBOUNDED."



BUT SO FAR... NOTHING. UNTIL YOU ARRIVED WITH THIS LITTLE APPLE.

YOU SEE, APPLE TREES ARE A FLOWERING SPECIES. THEY CAN'T PRODUCE FRUIT LIKE THIS WITHOUT A HIVE NEARBY.

HELP US, SON. BETTER YET, **JOIN US!** TOGETHER WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO RESTORE THE BALANCE OF NATURE.

AND SAVE HUMANKIND FROM COMPLETE EXTINCTION.

THIS SOUNDS LIKE MUMBO-JUMBO.



I GOT EVERYTHING I NEED IN MY PATCH. THINK I CARE IF HUMANS DIE OFF?

WHY SHOULD IT MATTER TO ME WHAT HAPPENS TO ANYONE...



...ELSE?

THE OLD MAN SUFFERED FROM DEPRESSION, BUT HE STILL UNDERSTOOD HUMAN NATURE.

HE KNEW THAT, DEEP DOWN, WE ALL YEARN TO BE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER.

TO CHANGE THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER.

SO THIS WAS YOUR PATCH? AND YOU DEFENDED IT ALL BY YOURSELF?

ACTUALLY, YOU GUYS ARE THE ONLY OTHER PEOPLE I'VE SEEN IN QUITE A WHILE.

THAT BUZZING-- DO YOU HEAR IT? WHERE'S IT COMING FROM?

UP IN THE RAFTERS-- LOOK!

DEAR GOD! A HIVE! AND IT'S HUGE!

I CALL 'EM DRIPPERS 'CAUSE THEY DRIP THIS STUFF THAT TASTES REALLY GOOD.

MMMMM! IS THIS THE HONEY YOU TAUGHT US ABOUT?

YES! THEY'RE BACK!

THERE'S MORE GOOD STUFF TO EAT OUT HERE.

THE DAY WE FOUND THE BEES, THE OLD MAN HIMSELF WAS TRANSFORMED

IT WAS AS IF THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD WAS LIFTED FROM HIS SHOULDERS.

The End



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THE MOST ACTION PACKED
FIGHT IN HISTORY...
"WITH ALL
SENSE LOST!"

A VISITOR IN WHITE

By Rick Veitch

*Based upon characters created by
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*

It was no less an auspicious occasion than the Great Christmas Eve blizzard that paralyzed London during the reign of Victoria. I'd just trundled home through the teeth of it after a long day at the salvation clinics doing what I could for London's most unfortunate. Exhausted but somewhat gratified, I filled my sleeping wife's stocking with small gifts and trinkets that I'd hoped would please her in the morning. As I banked the fire and turned back the gas I found myself musing upon someone I hadn't seen since the muggy heat of August and that bad business in Belgrave; my oldest and dearest friend, Mister Sherlock Holmes.

I'd once, early in our acquaintance, been obliged to explain the nature of Christmas and its origins to Holmes, who stubbornly refused to clutter up his agile mind with information he deemed non-essential to his detective work. Over the years he'd come to tolerate the odd slipper of tobacco I might gift him with but for the most part coolly disdained such traditional gestures of friendship and community.

I imagined him alone in this most festive season; his angular form wrapped in a purple dressing-gown, lounging upon the old sofa, a pipe-rack within his reach upon the right, a pile of newspapers near at hand. If the great detective had not unearthed a nugget worthy of his powers in the scandal sheets then I knew a well-used silver syringe would also be near. With this stark image in my mind, I decided then and there to pay a visit to the old Baker Street digs on Christmas



day with the intention of wishing Holmes the compliments of the season and perhaps bringing some cheerful companionship into his solitary existence.

With a fine sherry further warming my spirit, I prepared to make the stairs and join Mary in pleasant dreams of home and hearth. But as my foot found the first riser, there came a clatter from somewhere outside the walls of our abode. I moved to the window and pulled back the sash to see only an endless curtain of thick snow descending. Concluding the sound had been caused by clumps of ice cascading from the roof, I turned back to the stairs and my well-earned rest.

I had just laid my hand on the bannister when a second sound came; then another; both louder than the first. I rushed to the window and peered into the furious white maelstrom. This time it seemed as if I caught a quick glimpse of something clambering about in the street. In the driving storm it was impossible to make out the size or shape of the thing. But the more I studied the scene, the more I perceived some sort of creature moving out there in front of my house.

I recalled a late night tale my Afghan batman had spun concerning a race of white apes secreted somewhere in the high Himalayas. One by one, the short hairs on the back of my neck began to rise.

I snapped to attention as an indeterminate form came rippling up the front walk. With each step it gained further shape, until it seemed to coalesce into that of a man, but still abstract and etherial. I admit, for a deranged moment, I fancied myself Scrooge being visited by old Marley on Christmas leave from Hell.

I was fumbling for my service revolver when came a scratching at the door. Leaving the chain in place, I cracked the heavy oak portal half expecting to find some supernatural presence come down to earth with intentions beyond all human reason. Instead I was confronted by the figure of a living human being, albeit one dressed from head to toe in white. White spats covered his boots. White gloves his hands. A white woolen mask obscured the facial features so completely I could ascertain neither race nor identity. All of these garments were further whitened, if that was possible, by sticking of bits of snow.

For a long drawn moment the apparition stood silent and foreboding.

I could endure the suspense no longer. "Who are you? What do you want?" I called out; making sure the intruder could see my pistol through the crack of the open door. In response, one white gloved hand reached purposefully into the recesses of the white greatcoat. I girded myself for battle but my phantom did not produce a weapon. Instead it held before me a single lump of coal.

I confess my mind could not quite grasp the exact nature of these unfolding events and I am sure the expression on my face conveyed such confusion. I was finally jolted back to reality by a peal of sardonic laughter. This spook howled with a voice I knew only too well.

"Saint Nick has given us a gift for the ages, Watson! Come, come. Are you going to let me turn into a snow man out here or will you invite me inside?"

And then I was laughing too; delighted as the white outer attire came away to reveal the singular presence of Sherlock Holmes. He was in fine health and spirits I am relieved to report, and I was only too happy to pour us both three fingers of brandy and sit before the hearth; hoping my friend was here to share his latest adventure.

"I apologize for the mysterious entrance, Watson. But I know you appreciate my methods and thought it wise to demonstrate how I sometimes practice the art of concealment under certain conditions. Like many inhabitants of the animal kingdom, I find my movements leave little purchase for the predator's eye if appearance blends in to surroundings.

"This ivory attire is a visual hocus-pocus that has served me, and much we hold dear, well tonight, Watson. I have walked within spitting distance of my greatest adversary and he is not the wiser. Although I should say he will gain full appreciation of my accomplishment come Christmas morning."

I understood to whom Holmes referred to. But the name still rose unbidden in my throat, "Moriarty."

Holmes' lips curled into what for him served as satisfaction. "Easily the most dangerous man in Europe. And one with whom I have long engaged in a deadly multi-leveled game of mental chess. We have jousted through decoys and deflections on a fiendishly complex game board of surrogates and subterfuge. Over the decades I have succeeded in checking some of his most malevolent schemes, but never in cornering him.

The detective's eyes swelled owl-like. "Well, I have taken the game into a new dimension tonight, Watson. When Moriarty wakes on the morn he will know he has been checkmated once and for all."

A surge of pride based upon my friend's previous triumphs flooded through me. "Then you have assured the safety of the nation once again, Holmes?"

"That I have, dear Watson. After tonight, Moriarty is neutralized. This alone is a victory for free peoples everywhere." Holmes tossed me the lump of black bitumen. "And here is my trophy!

"The first inkling that Moriarty was back in England came this afternoon with a visit from Lestrade. He requested my assistance on an unusual murder and, certainly, the crime seemed designed to loosen my straightjacket of boredom. As things turned out, it was.

"A man had been found on a parapet of the Tower Bridge, one hundred feet above the river which, being so close to the sea, had not frozen over. Though the man's wounds were beyond grievous, there was no blood. He had a peculiar expression on his face as if he had died sucking a lemon. His eyes protruded grotesquely from their sockets. Footprints, Lestrade was quick to point out, had been obliterated by falling snow.

"Lestrade works admirably hard to earn his rank but seems forever trapped within the most basic arithmetic of crime and punishment; unable to grasp the higher geometries simple deductive reasoning offers the investigator. He had failed, of course, to note the angle the body lay or the exact nature of the strange wounds the victim had sustained. Of course he was blind to the light film of coal dust clinging to the man's boots and the dark weathered nature of his hands. I immediately concluded the victim had been involved with the coal industry in a managerial but hands-on practical manner.

"I've long been tracking the individuals and companies engaged in England's coal business and recently made myself aware of a certain unsavory group acting quite ruthlessly in their scheme for monopolistic supremacy. I was already on the lookout for any small tidbit of information that might somehow tie Moriarty to this mob.

"I didn't mention to Lestrade that the man's wounds had been inflicted by Brazilian Piranha fish, that the body had been drained of all blood by way of a coal gasification vacuum device, or that the angle of the body indicated it could only have arrived on this particular ledge ten stories above the Thames by way of a catapult mechanism.

"In the subtle and intricate game of shadows I have long played with Moriarty it is sometimes easy to sense his presence and sometimes not. But in this case he might as well have bought advertising on the side of London's trolleys. Exotic predator fish. Blood drained by vacuum. Catapult. As is the way of my oldest adversary, he had staged the murder in a freakish manner merely to summon me.

"And of course deliver his message. The Professor was alerting me I was in his sights. His men would soon attempt to take me out of the picture and thus provide maneuvering room for his plans. He also wanted to keep fresh in my mind how capable, resourceful and creative he could be in the cause of mayhem and murder.

"I was only too aware he would bring in the most skilled men from his global criminal network for the job. As I descended the tower, half expecting a pygmy's blow dart or whirling Ninja blade to seek me out, the snow was falling fiercely.

"But the truth about grandmasters is, even the most lauded sometimes blunder. The Professor is a Machiavelli of planning but had somehow neglected to account for

weather conditions. My little meteorology station in the back window at Baker Street alerted me to the rapid temperature and pressure drop accurately predicting blizzard conditions today. And as is my want, I prepared not only for snow but for Moriarty.

"I joined Lestrade in his carriage and we plowed slowly through the growing drifts back to Scotland Yard. The streets were virtually empty and most of the great buildings that inhabit central London frosted in a coating of white. By the time we'd reached our destination I'd identified three figures following us. Exiting the carriage, I made a game of debating Lestrade in the Yard while noting how the trio of assassins took up positions covering all doors into and out of the complex. Once inside, I took my leave of Lestrade slipped upstairs and dragooned an unoccupied storage closet. There, I quickly removed my dark gray outer garments and reversed them; their insides being expertly tailored by Mrs.



Hudson with a layer of purest white cloth. Spats, gloves and mask completed my transformation to monotone.

"I slipped out a second story window and into the storm. A drainpipe provided a convenient path down to the ground.

"Watson, I tell you I was the very incarnation of the polar bear unseen in the blizzard. As you experienced when I came knocking this evening, it isn't an easy thing to make out a man all dressed in white in the midst of arctic conditions. Taking care that my path went only through areas of complete whiteness, so I would not stand out in contrast to brick and stone, I was easily able to double around behind my assailants and observe them at my leisure. One was a Nubian with a fiercely tattooed face. Another an American of military bearing. The third a Turk known to me from a previous murder investigation. Obviously, all were experts in the use of the weapons they concealed beneath their garments.

"After an hour or more they realized I'd escaped their net and sullenly left the Yard, making their way on foot through the snow towards London's docks. In the raging storm, attired as I was, my hunters had no inkling their prey was following not ten steps behind.

Their destination was Limehouse Docks and an icy pier where a small but well appointed cabin steamer was being readied for rapid departure. As the blizzard howled about them, swarthy crewmen fought to load trunks and heap shovelfuls of coal into the boiler's firebox. I noted with some slight satisfaction the catapult device rigged on the fore deck. This had been the very boat that had steamed up the Thames and deposited the victim's body on the Tower Bridge earlier in the storm.

"It was then a team-of-eight pulling a large insulated coach clattered up to the quay. A man in black stepped down from the carriage followed by a second in heavy weather gear. The three assassins came forward and words were exchanged. The man in black was obviously the master and reacting angrily to news from his creatures.

"On my soul, Watson, in that blinding snow and dressed as I was in lilly white, I walked undetected within ten feet of this master in black to get a better look at him. It was James Moriarty in the flesh. And he was a revelation.

"You see, when one wrestles with a far removed adversary, engaging in deadly sport over the span of great distances and times, it is easy to inflate the other's presence. As it is perhaps only too human to magnify one's own perceived failings against the imagined strengths of what is effectively a witch's mirror image of one's self. But the real Moriarty, observed in his unguarded natural state, free of preening and poise, was significantly less than the Moriarty of my own imagination.

"I had long envisioned a master of such towering logic it dwarfed my own. But here before me I observed a victim of his own feelings. A savant, obviously, but of a mercurial presence and demeanor. He cried. He cursed. He laughed inappropriately. He became unnervingly

221B BAKER STREET
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MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES
CONSULTING DETECTIVE

Game Over

calm only to explode in screaming and insults. His minions, one of whom is known to me as a certain Colonel Moran, held him in such awe they dared not take their eyes from him. Their terror of his shifting moods made it all the easier for me to gauge this enigma at ever closer range.

"Touchingly, the Professor spoke of me in the strongest terms; one moment declaring my continued existence held the greatest threat to his plans, the next bemoaning my loss as a worthy opponent in a world of cretins. He regaled the crew, struggling to bring up a head of steam in the storm, of my powers of deduction which in his estimation border on the near miraculous. Of course I agree, but admit freely that beneath my mask I was most certainly blushing.

"Most importantly I was led to a new and deeper understanding of my true relationship to this arch-fiend. Just as his stronger and more perfect image lived in my fantasies, so does an imagined Holmes cast a shadow deep in the mind of Moriarty.

"More than once I was forced to step away as he paced impatiently, gloating that by restricting the supply and distribution of coal, he would spike the market price and make a king's fortune, even if it meant thousands of English, Welsh and Scots freezing to death in their homes this winter. He blubbered that he needed the money to fund a war in Ethiopia. Berating his assassins in the most insulting manner; at one point he picked up a stray piece of coal from the frozen deck and pitched it at them. The trio trudged off through the squalling snow, in search of me I suspect, and Moran carried the last of the bags from carriage to ship. There was a brief moment when Moriarty and I were quite alone; him unaware his bete noir was a mere knife's lunge behind his right ear.

"But a blade is not the style of Sherlock Holmes. I had come prepared with something even more effective; a small thin packet, wrapped in white tissue and tied with ribbon not unlike the traditional Christmas gifts you foist on me now and then. Employing skills I have learned from London's finest pickpockets, and for all purposes invisible to the non-discerning eye, I easily slipped the gift into Moriarty's overcoat where I was certain he would find it in the morning.

"And then, secure in the knowledge that the vicious innings we had played so whole heartedly would soon cease, I watched as he descended into the hold of his steamer and was spirited away into the blowing gale. I know you see me as a cold fish sometimes, Watson, but turning to leave the quay, I admit I felt a slight pang of passing nostalgia. I happened to notice the lump of coal Moriarty had hurled at my would-be assassins half covered in the snow. I retrieved it as a sort of prize; an object that would forever remind me of that final moment of triumph over my greatest opponent."

Holmes' story had so mesmerized me that for a moment I felt as if I was standing with him on that frozen pier and not sipping brandy before a warm hearth. As I stepped back across the veil I found myself stuttering, "Dammit Holmes, Moriarty's the Napoleon of crime — and you've let him escape his Waterloo?"

He chuckled as only Holmes could; with equal parts mirth and condescension. "Professor James Moriarty is no longer a threat to anyone, Watson. I have neutralized him in a way that will make perfect sense on Christmas morning."

"The gift!" I cried. "You've slipped some sort of device in the wrapping that will somehow put an end to him? Come, Holmes. I must know!"

"Not a device, Watson. Just one of my Consulting Detective calling cards upon which I have added a personal handwritten note to the Professor saying 'Game over.'"

"And this will end his career of infamy? I know I oftentimes fail to grasp your superhuman leaps of logic, Holmes, but how...?"

My friend rose from his easy chair and stretched like a long contented cat. "Moriarty will find and open the gift on Christmas morning and see it is from me. And he will never be certain how I secreted upon his person. He will only know that his greatest opponent has the ability to strike so intimately and seemingly at will. This knowledge will take on an inflated weight in his fevered imagination. He will look at the problem every which way and he will know he has been checkmated. To ensure survival he must disappear from the game board; meaning he will further desist from all criminal activity in England and on the continent. He's not an idiot."

As I rose to assist my old friend in retrieving his garments, the ebony lump of coal tumbled from my lap onto the tile floor, splitting evenly in two. I stooped to pick up the pieces, noticing that the rock and its insides appeared to have been worked. "Dammit, Holmes, but there's something not quite right about this bitumen you got from Moriarty."

I held up one half of the lump and we both stood transfixed. A small chess piece; a white king, was fitted into a perfect cutout carved in the heart of the coal.

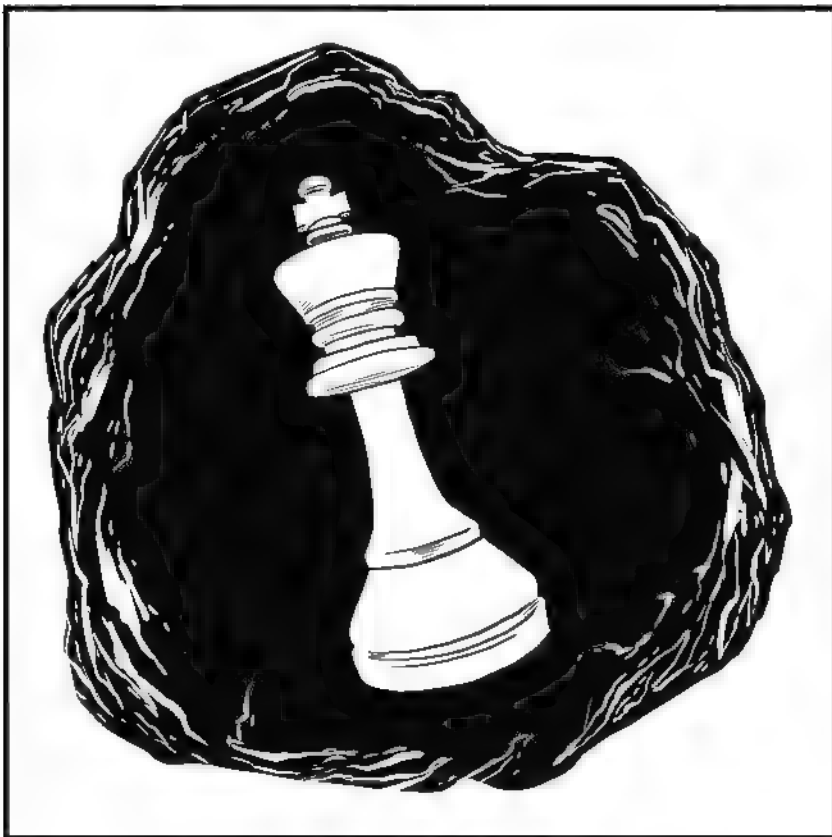
Temple veins rose on my companion's forehead; his physical eyes, though open, saw nothing. But the inner vision of Sherlock Holmes was fixed in deep study of some carefully modeled game board of Euclidian complexity. Finally, he blinked; coming out of his reverie grasping a greater meaning. "I suspect there will be a personal inscription on it, Watson."

Three words were scripted under the base: "Merry Christmas, Sherlock."

The world's greatest consulting detective chuckled again; but this time his laughter was mirthless and full of self-retribution. "The game goes on, Watson."

Then Mister Sherlock Holmes drew the mask down over his features and stalked out my door, disappearing like a wraith into the blinding white night.

The End

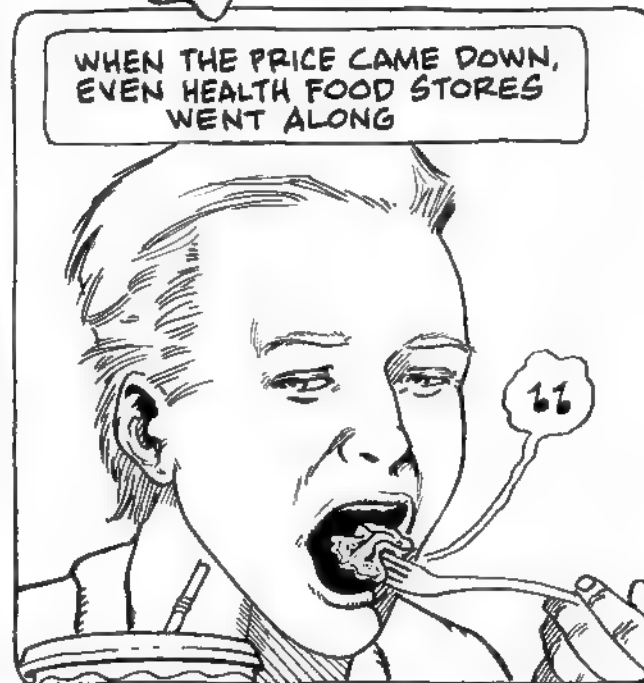






KASHA VARNISKES

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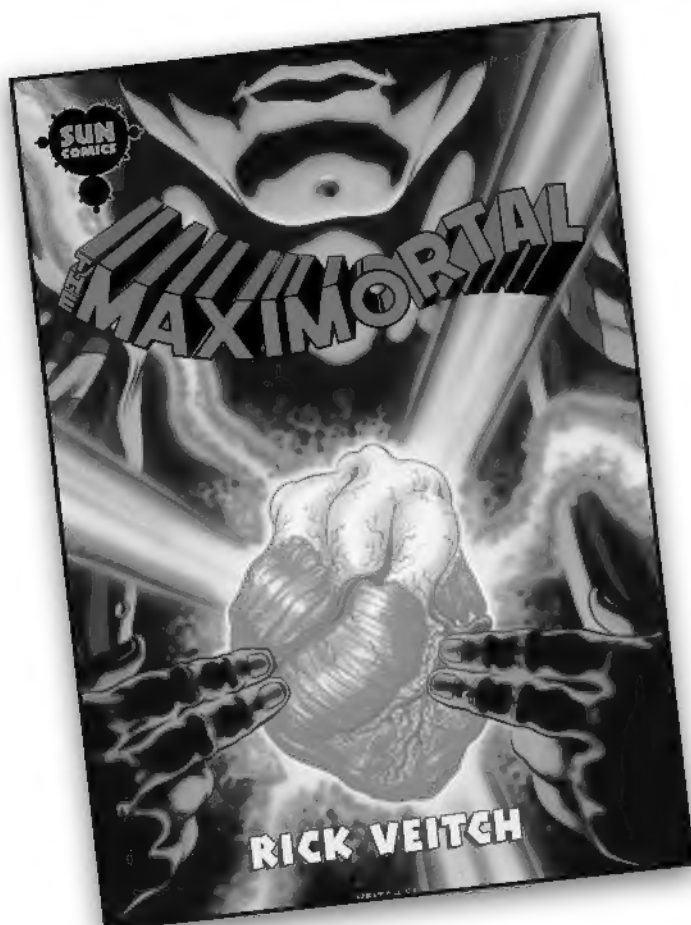


UNTIL ONE MORNING HE WAS ABOUT TO GO TO WORK, THE KASHA HE WAS HEATING UP FROM LAST NIGHT STARTED WHISPERING





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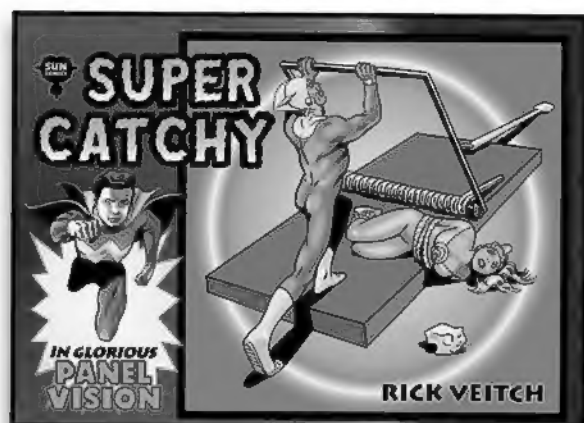
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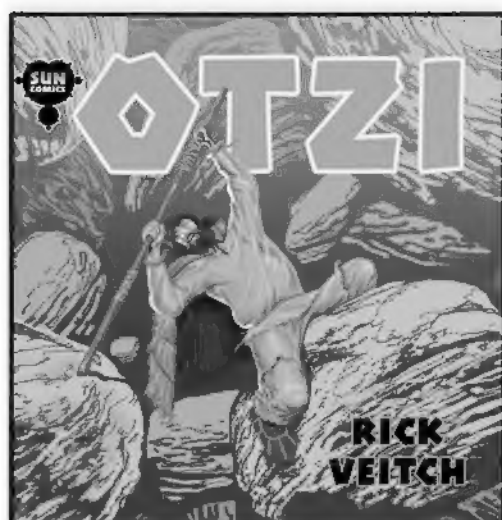
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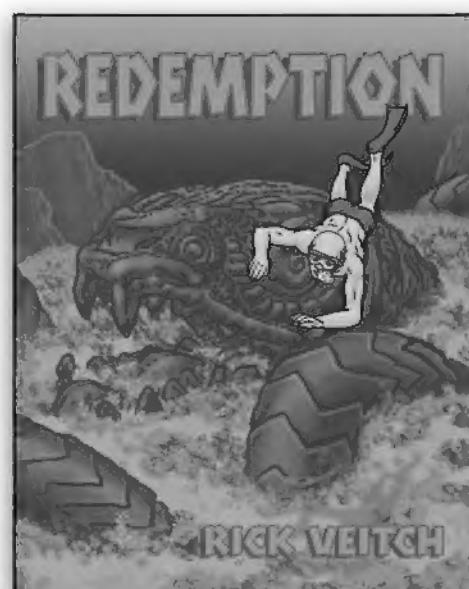
OTZI

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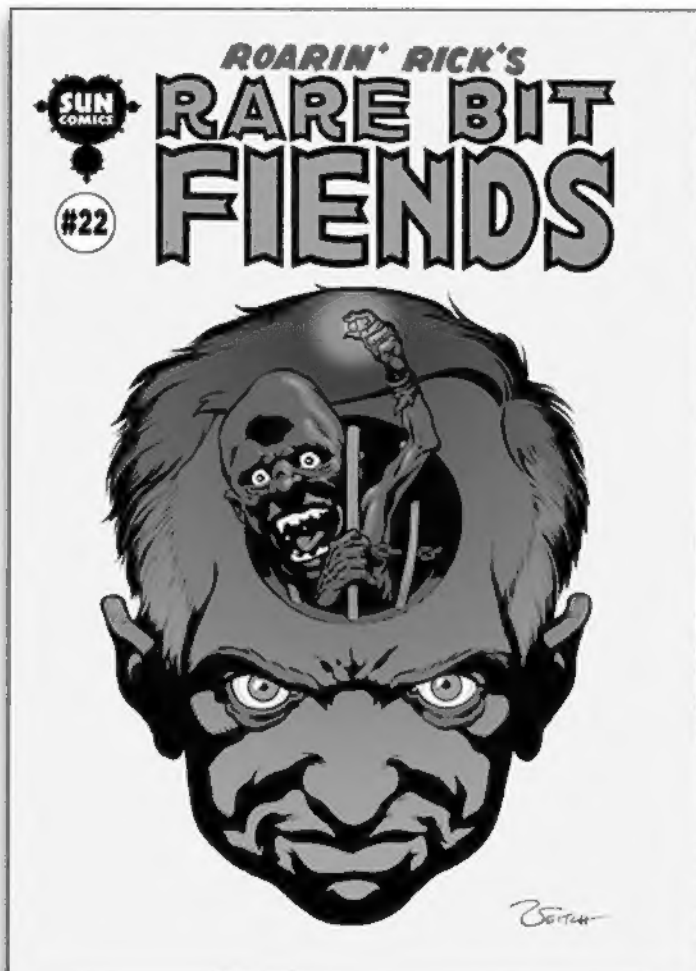
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